

THE
Reality and Authority
OF OUR
BLESSED SAVIOUR'S
MIRACLES
DEFENDED:

In Answer to all the Material Objections
which have been raised against THEM
both *Antient* and *Modern*.

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THE

P R E F A C E.



SHALL make no other apology for publishing this discourse upon the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, than that it is incumbent on every one, who hath leisure and opportunity, to use his best endeavours to obviate the present pernicious attempts of Infidels against the Christian Religion: and since the main proof and evidence of Christianity arises from the Miracles which Christ wrought, I thought that a short and plain discourse on that subject in vindication of those Miracles from the several objections which have been raised against them might be of some use to many persons, who have not leisure and inclination to peruse larger treatises.

The literal sense of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, and the fitness and propriety of the severa. circum-
stances mention'd therein, have been admirably well
defended by the learned Bishop Smalbroke, and the

Author of those excellent discourses entitled, The Miracles of Jesus vindicated, and others ; and the antient Fathers of the Church have been fully prov'd to understand the Miracles of Jesus Christ in the literal sense, and have been clear'd from those extravagant and monstrous interpretations which Mr Woolston hath put upon them.

*And Mr Woolston himself in a piece lately publish'd gives allowance to suppose at least, as another learned Prelate of our Church observes *, that after all, our Saviour's Miracles may be real, while he undertakes to shew (for so his own words are) that whether there be any sense, truth and fact, or not, in the letter of Jesus's Miracles, yet they are typical things, and ought to be allegorically interpreted, and will receive a mysterious and more wonderful accomplishment after the manner and to the same purpose that the Fathers and he do apply them, being no other (whether actually wrought or not) than figures, signs and emblems of his future and mysterious operations.*

After this he tells us, that there is foundation enough to build allegorical interpretations on, and particularly to prove the literal stories of Christ's Miracles to be emblems of his future and mysterious operations. And he undertakes absolutely to demonstrate, that the Miracles of Jesus will certainly receive such a mysterious accomplishment as the Fathers and he have beforehand interpreted them in ; and tells us, that the thing he nauseates and abominates is the confinement of mens thoughts to the literal stories of Jesus's

* *Bishop of London's Charge to his Clergy, 1730. p. 8, 9.*
Miracles :

Miracles : but, as that learned Prelate observes, he reserves to himself a right of resuming, if he pleases, the argument against the literal truth of Christ's Miracles : and tho' as his Lordship well remarks, he will not surely think himself at liberty to resume that argument, after he has made these Miracles to be Signs, Types and Figures, unless he first tells us how a thing which has no real being at present can be the Sign or Type or Figure of a thing to come ; yet I fear Mr Woolston will not easily be brought off by the just force of that reasoning, because it is in this very thing his great error and delusion does consist, and in which he heavily complains of his adversaries treatment of him, when they contend that the Miracles of Jesus Christ could not have a moral and allegorical signification, if they were not real Facts ; since according to him the Parables of the Gospel (which are allow'd on all hands not to be real Facts in history) are as capable of being allegorized as the most uncontroverted historical Facts can be *.

But now the weakness of Mr Woolston's complaint, and the great strength of his Opponents reasoning upon this head will be the better perceiv'd, if we consider the difference between them and Mr Woolston in this particular, which depends entirely upon a different way of understanding this matter ; for when Mr Woolston alledges that the Mi-

* He (Bishop Smalbroke) entirely mistakes the design of my discourses, he knows not what I aim and drive at. There is one paradox runs thro' his whole book, viz. that the literal stories of our Saviour's Miracles must of necessity be true, or I should have no foundation to build allegory upon ; which is a gross mistake of other Writers against me as well as himself. Who knows not that the profest Parables of Jesus have nothing of letter in them, yet are a good foundation for allegory ? Woolston's Defence, part i. p. 50.

racles of Jesus Christ are capable of having an allegorical meaning tho' they are not real Facts, he means no more by the Miracles than the Narration of them in the Gospels. And in that sense what he says is unquestionably true, since a narration that is entirely parabolical is as capable of an allegorical sense and meaning, i. e. a sense different from the letter of the narration, as a narration of the most real and undoubted Facts can possibly be. And indeed it would be very strange if it should not, when the very nature and essence of a Parable consists in the Allegory that is contain'd in the words thereof.

Whereas when Bishop Smalbroke and others contend that the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour could not be allegorized if they were not literal or real, they mean by the Miracles not the Narration of them, as Mr. Woolston does, but the Facts themselves, of which the Gospel is the Narration. And they think (and that with the greatest reason) that if those Facts had not been really done, there would not have been such a Narration of them as we have in the Gospels; since as they rightly observe (and will be clearly seen in the following discourse) it is plainly a Narration not of things parabolical, but real; the not attending to which is the ground of Mr. Woolston's complaint of his adversaries treatment just mentioned.

And therefore the better to silence this complaint, and to cut off all possibility of Mr. Woolston's retreat, by his insinuating that we first take it for granted, that the Miracles of Christ are real Facts, and then conclude that they could not have an allegorical sense, if they had not a literal one; I thought it would not be amiss to add to what hath been already advanced upon this subject a few plain and clear arguments to prove, that the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour

Saviour which are recorded in the Gospels are real Facts done by Him ; and therefore that they are things distinct from the Narration, and consequently that they are not Parables, which have no truth and reality in them distinct from the Narration ; and likewise to shew, that there is a manifest difference made even in the Gospel it self between our Blessed Saviour's Miracles and His Parables. And if this can be clearly made out, it will quite overthrow the ground and foundation upon which Mr Woolston's main Hypothesis is built and establish'd.

And at first I did not design to proceed any further upon this subject than this, and to remove two or three exceptions which this Author hath made against our Saviour's Miracles considered as Facts ; but I soon call'd to mind, that there were other objections made by the enemies of our Faith against Christ's Miracles, which were more considerable than any thing which Mr Woolston hath urged against them ; and that by reason of the great artifice and industry of our adversaries in spreading their poison in all parts of the Kingdom and especially in and near the Metropolis, many persons are in continual danger of being drawn away by their insinuations ; and that tho' there have been sufficient answers given to those objections, yet they lie scatter'd up and down in several distinct treatises, which many persons who are well dispos'd have not opportunity and leisure to peruse ; and therefore I concluded with my self, that to have a clear and plain answer to all those objections in one view might be of great service and benefit to such persons.

I have no more to add, but only to beg of God to give a blessing to this and all other endeavours, which are used for defeating the pernicious attempts of the enemies

enemies of our 'Holy Religion: and if this *Essay* shall have so much effect and influence upon any persons among us, as to confirm them the more steadfastly in the *Faith of Christ's Gospel* (in the true belief and practice of which the greatest perfection of human nature does consist) let them give God the *Praise and Glory*, and I have the end which I propos'd in the publication.



E R R A T A.

PAG. 9. l. 15. instead of for read and. Ibid. not. l. 3. for *τέρεσα* r. *τέρεσα*. p. 15. l. 6. instead of for r. of. p. 18. l. 1. for as r. which. p. 21. not. lin. 1. for Vid. p. 17. r. p. 13. p. 24. for Chistian r. Christian. p. 25. l. 20. for but r. for. p. 26. the note is to be read at the bottom of p. 25. p. 28. not. l. 3. for sunt r. fint. p. 30. not. l. 33. after *disbelieved* add p. 33. l. 5. after which, add he thinks. p. 36. l. 13. for represented r. represents. p. 43. l. 1. for nature r. native. ibid. not. for Ibid. p. 32. r. Vid. p. 34, &c. of this treatise. p. 52. not. l. 9. for *their hardness and slowness of the hearts*, r. *the hardness and slowness of their hearts*. p. 55. not. lin. ult. for Grot. de ver. lib. xi. §. 5. r. lib. 2. §. 5. p. 101. not. l. 9. for Council's r. *Converts*. p. 114. l. 6. for but r. a.

THE



THE
Reality and Authority
OF OUR
Blessed SAVIOUR'S Miracles
DEFENDED, &c.

IT is not my design at present, to treat of the excellency of our Blessed Saviour's miracles, which is what *Nicodemus* might perhaps have in his view, when he said to our Saviour in the gospel, *No man can do these miracles that thou doſt.* Job. iii. 2. Neither do I propose at this time to enlarge upon the nature and kinds of miracles, and what proof and evidence they give us of the truth of Christianity; for this is a subject that hath been fully handled by many excellent writers, from whom any one that is desirous of it, may receive compleat satisfaction in that matter. And there seems to be no great necessity of insisting upon it, since

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in

in the place of scripture before-mentioned, we have the express acknowledgement of *Nicodemus*, who was a *ruler of the Jews*, i. e. one of their great council or *Sanhedrim*, that the miracles which Christ wrought, were a sufficient evidence of his divine authority. For says he, to our Blessed Saviour, *Rabbi*, *we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doſt, except God be with him.* Nay so great is the evidence of truth, which arises from the working of real miracles, that *Spinoza* himself, who was one of the most learned of all our modern atheists, did yet acknowledge, as the learned Mr *Gurdon* (a) observes from *Monsieur Bayle*, that if he could have believed the matter of fact of that one miracle, of *Lazarus* being raised to life again after he had been really dead, he would have given up the whole cause of infidelity, owned our Saviour's mission to have been from God, and embrac'd the christian faith. And indeed there is nothing which does so fully manifest the great power and authority of real and undoubted miracles, as the restless and implacable endeavours of all the adversaries of our faith, to undermine the truth and reality of them. And therefore I shall not spend any more time in the illustration of that point, but shall proceed to that which is of much greater necessity, *viz.* to establish the truth and certainty of our Blessed Saviour's miracles beyond all contradiction. And I do not know how I can do any thing of so great importance to the benefit and happiness of mankind, since if the miracles of our Saviour, as they are recorded in the gospel, can once be prov'd to be certain and indubitable, they will infallibly demon-

(a) *Gurdon's Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, p. 355.
strate

strate that he came from God, and consequently will assure us of that life and immortality which he hath brought to light by his gospel. and methinks if prejudice were ever allowable in any case, it might, in some measure, be indulg'd in favour of Christianity, when we consider the invaluable nature and excellency of our holy religion ; how much it tends to the honour and glory of God, and the present and future happiness of Men. But I do not speak this as if I claim'd or desir'd this favour and privilege ; all that I request of any man, is, that he would not entertain any prejudice against Christianity ; but that he would coolly and impartially examine into the nature of it, and judge of the evidence of it's truth by the same rules and criterions of certainty which he thinks sufficient in all other cases. Now the method which I shall take in the handling of this subject, shall be to vindicate the truth and reality of our Blessed Saviour's miracles, by answering all the material and considerable objections, which the enemies of our faith have as yet urged against them. And then, in the second place, to make some useful observations, in which I shall confirm the truth and authority of the gospel, in which these miracles are recorded.

The objections that have been raised against the miracles of our Blessed Saviour, are of two sorts. *First*, The objections of those who either question or deny the truth and certainty of the facts themselves. And, *Secondly*, the objections of such as allowing our Saviour's miracles to be real facts, do either deny them to be what we call by the name of miracles, or else alledge some pretence and hypothesis or other to solve the argument arising from the power and authority of them.

And, *First*, I will consider the objections of those who question or deny the truth and certainty of the facts themselves. But before I proceed to this, it will be very proper and necessary to make two or three previous observations concerning miracles, which there will be occasion to refer to in the following discourse.

I. A miracle, as a great author describes (*b*) it, is a supernatural effect, evident and wonderful to sense. In which description it is not supposed, that there is, from the nature of the thing, any greater difficulty in the working of those things that are miraculous, than many of those which are more ordinary and common. For it certainly requires as great a degree of power to put nature into that general order and course, in which it is established, as it does to divert that order and course in any particular instance; and yet the latter is what we call a miracle, and not the other. It is certainly as great an argument of power, and seemingly to us a much greater, to cause the sun, or any of the planets, to move constantly and regularly in their orbits, than to put a stop to their motion; and yet this latter we account miraculous and not the former. And the reason of it is grounded upon this, that God having created this world, and established every thing therein, in that particular course and order, which was most conducive to the great ends and designs of his wisdom and providence, we cannot rationally suppose that either God himself will change this order which he hath settled in nature, or suffer any inferior agents, who are all dependent upon him,

(*b*) Tillotson's *Works*, Fol. Vol. iii. p. 495.

to make any material alterations therein, unless it be upon some very weighty and important occasions, in which his own glory and the benefit and happiness of mankind is much concerned.

II. It has been a matter of great dispute among learned men, what power the Devil and his agents have in working those things which we call miracles; and whether those wonderful things said to be done by them, were really and in fact performed, or only in delusion or in appearance; there is a great deal which hath been said on both sides; but it is not necessary, to the present subject, to enter into this controversy: for how great soever the power of the Devil may be in this particular, the cause of Christianity will not in the least degree be affected by it; as we shall more plainly perceive by considering the case of miracles, as they are wrought by evil spirits, in these following sections.

First, As * the Devil and his angels are spirits of great knowledge and capacity, and especially as they are to us invisible, there is no doubt but they are able to work miracles, or (which comes much to the same thing) such signs and wonders as we are not able to distinguish from true miracles. And this the holy scripture supposes, as in *Deut. xiii.* where *Moses* instructs the *Jews*, that if any prophet should give them a sign or a wonder to entice them to the worship of false gods, and the sign or wonder shou'd come to pass, that nevertheless they should not hearken to the words of that prophet, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* and *St Paul* speaking of *Antichrist*, tells us that his *coming is after the work-*

* *Vid. Grot. de verit. Relig. Christianæ, lib. iv. §. 8.*

ing of Satan, with all power, and signs and lying wonders, (c) and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, 2 *Theff.* ii. 9, 10. And when our Blessed Saviour cautioned his disciples against the false christ, and false prophets that should arise, he observes that they should shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they should deceive the very elect. *Matth.* xxiv. 24. Now I cannot see of what use and service it will be to religion, to assert that these and the like wonderful things, which are here ascribed to evil spirits, were not really and in fact performed by them, but were only delusory and in appearance. For, *First*, as *Archbishop Tillotson* (d) well observes in the case of the magicians of *Egypt*, (and it will equally hold in all others) I do not see what is gained by saying that the magicians did only delude mens senses, but did not turn their rods really into serpents as *Aaron* did his; because this may be said on one side as well as the other; for to the standers by there was no difference, but the one seem'd to the senses of the beholders, to be as real as the other; and the text makes no difference, but says the magicians did in like manner. *For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents.* *Exod.* vii. 11, 12. And, *Secondly*, as the learned *Dr Samuel Clarke* well expresses it, (e) to impose in this manner upon the senses of men (not by sleights and delusions, but by really so affecting the organs of sense, as to make things appear what they are not) is to all intents and purposes as true a miracle, and as great a one, as making real changes in the things themselves. To which we may add what *Dr Tillotson* (f) says upon the

(c) *Vid. Grot. in loc.* (d) *Vol. iii. p. 496.*

(e) *Sermons at Boyle's Lectures. part. 2. prop. xiv. §. 5.*

(f) *Tillotson ibid.*

same head, that if we are not to believe any thing to be a miracle, when to our senses it appears to be wrought, we are never to believe any, unless we could make some difference between those miracles which are real, and those that only appear to be wrought; for if we know not how to distinguish them, they are all one to us as if they were real. So that there is no necessity and reason at all, (neither do I think it will any ways tend to the advantage of Christianity) to suppose, that the miracles or wonders performed by evil spirits were not real, but only delusory and in appearance. I know that which renders many learned men averse to this opinion is, that they imagine the allowing the miracles of evil spirits to be real, will infer in them a power of creation; which is absurd and impossible, as we shall see presently; and this perhaps was the reason why *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, and many others of the ancient fathers of the church were of that mind, and thought that the miracles which the magicians of *Egypt* wrought were only in appearance (g). But there are several solutions which may be given of that case, which will account for the truth and reality of the miracles, without ascribing to evil spirits a power of creation, as will be evident to any one who will consult the critics upon the text last mentioned.

Secondly, Tho' there is no doubt but that evil spirits have a power of working real miracles, yet it is certain that their power is restrained and limited, and depends intirely upon God's permission. And it is generally agreed by learned men, that how great soever their power may

(g) Vid. Poli Synops. Critic. in Exod. vii. 12.

be, it does not extend to any thing which implies omnipotence, or a power equal to that of creation; which was the case of our Blessed Saviour's miracles as they are recorded in the gospel; it being manifestly as great an instance of power to give sight to those who were born blind, to restore parts that were absolutely decayed to their proper uses, and to raise the dead, and all this by immediate word and command; as it was to create a being at first, and to endue it with life and all the proper instruments of motion and sensation. And there is a very plain reason for putting this limitation upon the power of evil spirits; since, as a learned Prelate observes, (b) their power is not infinite, and no less power than what is infinite is able to overcome the otherwise insuperable difficulties and natural impossibilities that attend such things: and as the same excellent author well argues, if any inferior beings had independently of God a power of performing such miraculous actions as these, they must be supposed to have a power of creating and restoring, equal to that of God himself, which would make them cease to be created and inferior agents, and manifestly infer a plurality of Gods, which is contrary to the strictest reason and demonstration. And therefore tho' evil spirits may have a power of working real miracles, yet I cannot see what prejudice this can be to the cause of Christianity, since it is plainly limited to those of an inferior kind, and cannot extend to such miracles as imply omnipotence and the power of creation, which the miracles of our Blessed Saviour plainly do. I know indeed that some men

(b) *Bishop Smalbroke's Vindication of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, part i. pag. 12.*

make a distinction between signs and wonders and miracles in order to avoid the difficulty of allowing the Devil a power of working real miracles; and think that tho' the Devil may have an ability to work signs and wonders, yet he cannot work any real miracles. But this is only a different way of expressing the same thing, and signifies no more than that the power of the Devil in working of miracles is very much inferior to that of God. For there does not seem to me to be any difference in the things which are expressed by these three different words; but that according to the usual language of scripture they are only different expressions of the same thing. *And* if there be any real difference between them, yet it will be to no purpose to urge it in the present case; since, as the learned *Grotius* (i) observes, the same variety of expression is used concerning the miracles of Satan and his ministers, as of those of our Blessed Saviour himself. *2 Theſſ. ii. 9. Acts ii. 22.* And therefore the difference between the one and the other is not to be judg'd of by the variety of expressions (k), but by the different degrees of power which are conspicuous and visible in the different miracles which are wrought by them. But,

(i) *Grot. in 2 Theſſ. ii. 9.*

(k) *It is to no purpose to enquire nicely into the difference of these words σημεῖα, τέρατα, συναρπαγή, signs, wonders, and miracles; because in all probability there is no difference intended; it being the manner of the Hebrews, when they would express a great thing, or a great degree of any thing, to heap several words together signifying the same thing; so we find Deut. vi. 5. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. i. e. Greatly, with a very ardent and intense degree of affection. So likewise in the text, God is said to bear witness to the Apostles with signs, and wonders, and miracles. i. e. in a very extraordinary manner, by great and wonderful miracles. Tilſon Vol. 3. p. 495.*

Thirdly and lastly, That we may be effectually secur'd from the pernicious influence of those signs or miracles which are wrought by evil spirits to countenance their designs, it has pleased God in his good providence to give us these two plain rules, by which we may certainly discover the cheat and delusion of them. *First*, The nature of the design or doctrine, for the support of which the miracles are wrought, will sufficiently discover to us the author and original of them; if the doctrine be holy and divine, and agreeable to the attributes and perfections of God, we may be assured that the miracles which are wrought in proof of it are derived from his authority; for it is absolutely inconsistent with the nature of the Devil and with the design and interests of his kingdom, to work any miracles in testimony of such doctrine; for this would be to destroy and divide his kingdom against itself, as our Blessed Saviour excellently argued with the *Jews*, when they objected to his miracles as if they were wrought by the power of the Devil. *Matth. xii. 35, &c.* and therefore the excellency and goodness of the doctrine is a safe and sure guide to us in this respect. And on the other side, if the doctrine be in its nature evil and tends to sin, if it be in any wise inconsistent with the honour and glory of God and the peace and happiness of human society, we may be as sure that it does not come from God, how many and great soever may be the *wonders* and *miracles* which are wrought in testimony of it, as we are certain from the undeniable principles of natural religion, that God is a Being of infinite holiness and purity, and consequently that he cannot have any pleasure in wickedness, or give the least umbrage or countenance to sin and iniquity.

But, *Secondly*, lest men should not think that the goodness of the doctrine should in this case be sufficien

sufficient for their direction and security ; but should wonder to find that the Devil can work any miracles at all to countenance his designs ; it has pleased God to give those, who have his authority and commission, a power to work much greater and more astonishing miracles than the Devil can do, and also (which is a most convincing evidence in this case) to put a manifest check and restraint upon the Devil's power whensoever they please. Thus it was in the case of *Moses* and the magicians of *Egypt*, when they contended together for superiority. The magicians did indeed cause their rods to become serpents as *Aaron* did, *Exod. vii. 11, 12.* but here was a manifest instance of superiority on *Moses*'s side, because it is said in the same place that *Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.* And tho' afterwards the magicians brought up frogs upon the land as well as *Aaron*, *chap. viii. 6, 7.* yet the authority of *Moses* and *Aaron* was in this respect visibly greater than that of the magicians, because they could not by their power deliver the land from them ; but *Pharaoh* was obliged to apply himself to *Moses* and *Aaron* that they would intreat the Lord to remove them from the land, and it was done accordingly, *ver. 8, 13.* And immediately after this we find a manifest restraint laid upon the power of the magicians ; for when they attempted to smite the dust of the earth that it might become lice, as *Moses* and *Aaron* had done before them ; the scripture tells us they could not. And accordingly we find they gave up the cause, and acknowledged the miracle was done by the finger of God, *ver. 16 to 20.* So that here was no danger at all of being imposed upon by the power of the Devil in the wonderful things which the magicians performed ; so long as *Moses* and *Aaron* had

had such a manifest superiority of power on their side, and at length put a final stop and cessation to that of the Devil. And in the same manner the Apostles confuted the pretensions of *Simon Magus*, who had so infatuated the people of *Samaria* with his sorceries that he was said to be the great power of God, by conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost upon them; which *Simon* well knowing that he could not do, would fain have purchased it with money, *Act*s viii. 9 to 20. And to mention no more, when *Elymas* the sorcerer withstood St *Barnabas* and St *Paul*, (whom *Sergius Paulus* the deputy of *Cyprus* had sent for that he might hear the word of God) and had endeavoured to turn away the deputy from the faith, we find that St *Paul* soon exerted his power over him by causing him to become blind, so that he could not see the sun for a season. *Act*s xiii. 6 to 12. And perhaps this method of God's providence in suffering the Devil thus to stand in competition with his own Prophets and Apostles, may be more effectual to the conviction of unbelievers, than if they had performed their miraculous actions alone and by themselves: for it has ever been the constant opinion of mankind, that the Devil is a being of great capacity and power, and upon this apprehension it was natural for unbelievers to support their cause against the proper effect and influence of those miracles, which true Prophets and Apostles might perform; by conceiving that the Devil could at any time do the like whenever he should think fit to exert himself; whereas when they plainly saw that the miracles which the servants of God wrought were superior to and much greater than those of the Devil, and not only so, but that they visibly put a stop to his power, they were obliged to give up the cause of infidelity, and

and acknowlege that those persons were sent from God ; which accordingly we find was generally done by them, and not by them only, but by the ministers of Satan themselves, as appears from the forementioned instances.

III. Tho' the chief and principal design of working miracles be to attest the authority of any person or doctrine, yet it is possible miracles may not be so absolutely restrained to that particular ; but God may have different ends and designs of his providence to be served by them. (1) St *Paul* among the various gifts of the Spirit, which were communicated to the Christians in his time, mentions that of working miracles, *1 Cor. xii. 10.* And this miraculous power remained in the Church for a great while after ; and particularly the power of casting out devils continued to the *Third century*, as the ancient Fathers of the Church assure us. And tho' this power was to all impartial observers a very good evidence of the truth of Christianity, yet there is no doubt but it was exercised by many persons, who had no immediate authority and commission from God to preach and establish any doctrine ; since many of the Fathers assure us upon their own knowledge, that this latter gift was common to the meanest Christian in their times. (2) And therefore it seems to be a particular act of God's goodness to the Christian Church to give it such an extraordinary power over the Devil, till his influence upon the bodies of men should wholly cease ; and if in other ages of the world, it shall please God to give to

(1) Similesque aliorum prodigiorum causæ existere potuerunt, quæ cum religione nil haberent commune. *Grot. de Veritat. lib. iv. §. 8.*

(2) Vid. Tillotson, *Vol. iii. p. 508.*

any good men a power of working miracles, either as a mark of dignity and character to a person who is to be an instrument of some peculiar designs of his providence, (which a learned critic (m) thinks to be the case of *Vespasian*, if he really performed those miraculous cures ascribed to him, of which more hereafter) or as particular instances of grace and goodness, he knows with whom he trusts that power, and that it is in the hands of such as will not make an ill use of it; by establishing any doctrines as coming from him, for which they have not his warrant and authority; or if they should presume to do so, he can easily suppress their power, when ever they should dare to make such an attempt. And therefore it does not seem to be any prejudice to the doctrine of miracles as they are alleg'd in testimony of the divine authority of persons or doctrines, if we should suppose they may be sometimes wrought upon other occasions; the use that is to be of which observation we shall see more hereafter. And thus having made some necessary observations concerning miracles, I proceed to the main consideration, which is to vindicate the miracles of our Blessed Saviour from all the material and considerable objections which have been raised against them. And,

First, Let us consider the argument of those persons who question and suspect the truth and reality of our Blessed Lord's miracles; tho' they do not positively and absolutely deny it.

(m) Smalbroke Vindicat. p. 24. *Si verum est per Vespasianum cæco, &c. If it be true that Vespasian restored a blind man to his sight, it might be done to give the greater veneration to him upon this account, and that by this means he might the more easily obtain the Roman empire; and he was therefore made choice of by God, that he might execute his judgments upon the Jews.* Grot. *ibid.* See the notes upon the place in Grotius.

Now the ground of these mens jealousy and suspicion in this matter is this, they observe there hath been a great deal of imposture in this point of miracles, both in the former and latter ages of the Church ; and that, as a great writer (n) expresses it, the custom of embellishing all remarkable events with miracles was for several ages in fashion : and therefore they are apt to think that the case of our Blessed Saviour's miracles may be the same ; and that notwithstanding the seeming authority and evidence with which they have been reported to the world, they might have been in a great measure owing to the weakness and credulity of the people, or to the art and contrivance of cunning and designing men. This is the plea, which our modern infidels most commonly make to excuse themselves for their suspicion of the truth and reality of Christ's miracles ; but tho' there have been some considerable men amongst them, who have sheltered themselves by this kind of reasoning, yet it is in itself very weak and trifling. For it is never allowed to be a good argument, that there is no such thing as truth, because there is some deceit and imposture. A man might as well argue that there is no true coin, because there is confessedly some that is adulterate : or, since it is undeniable that there have been many false and spurious books impos'd upon the world, therefore there is no discourse or history which is authentick and genuine. But we must not let the matter pass thus, but since the enemies of our faith lay so much weight thereupon, it shall therefore be more thoroughly and distinctly considered. Now the imposture and deceit upon which these men ground their suspicion, being applied to the miracles which were said

(n) Rapin's *History of England*, Vol. i. p. 373.

to be done in the former as well as the latter ages of the Church ; it will be proper and necessary to consider this matter under these two heads and distinctions. And,

First, As to the former ages of the Church. Now that which they urge in their behalf upon this head is this ; *viz.* that there are many relations of miracles given to us by some of the most eminent Fathers of the Church, such as *St Basil*, *St Ambrose*, *St Austin*, and particularly by *St Jerom*, which are upon all accounts so irrational and incredible, that some even of our own divines do not give their assent to them ; and chiefly those extravagant relations which they make of great and extraordinary cures, which were said to be wrought at the tombs and sepulchres of the Martyrs : among which *St Jerom* particularly gives us a very wonderful instance, that after the body of *Hilarion* was stolen out of *Cyprus* where it was interred, and carried into *Palestine*, upon which a certain woman who formerly went constantly to his tomb was ready to break her heart ; God took so much pity upon her, that as the true body wrought great miracles in *Palestine*, so likewise many and great miracles continued still to be wrought in *Cyprus* at the tomb where it was first laid (o). Upon this our modern infidels argue thus ; that since the world was plainly imposed upon in these miraculous relations which are given to us in the fourth age, and by such eminent and approv'd writers as were just now mentioned, why may we not pass the same judgment concerning those miracles which are said to be done by *Jesus Christ*? for a full answer to which ob-

(o) Vid. *Burnet on the xxxix Articles. artic. xxii. p. 243.*
Cave's Primitive Christianity, part. i. chap. 3. towards the end.

jection

jection let the reader be pleased to attend to these following considerations.

First, Supposing that these relations of Miracles which are given to us by the Fathers of the fourth age are entirely false, and that these pious and good men were too credulous and too easily impos'd upon in the belief of them; yet this will not in the least affect the cause of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, as they are related to us by the holy Apostles. For however the Fathers of the fourth age might have been deluded in this matter (of which more shall be said presently) yet the Apostles could not possibly be mistaken and imposed upon in the affair of Christ's Miracles. For the Miracles which our Blessed Saviour wrought were the objects of their senses, and therefore they could not possibly be deceived about them; they were done publickly in the presence of enemies as well as friends; and the facts which the Apostles gave testimony to were not delivered upon the report of other persons, as many of the miraculous relations of the Fathers undoubtedly were, but the Apostles were themselves the eye witnesses of them. *1 Job. i. 1.* And then as the Apostles could not possibly be deceived themselves in this matter, so neither could they possibly deceive others, as I shall fully shew from several concurrent reasons and circumstances in the latter part of this discourse, in which I shall confirm the truth and authority of the holy Gospel, in which the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour are recorded. And therefore whatever becomes of the authority of the Fathers of the fourth age and of the truth of those miraculous relations here mentioned, the testimony which the Apostles gave to the reality of Christ's Miracles will remain clear and irrefragable, if once we can prove the Gospel to be a true histo-

D ry;

ry ; as I do not in the least doubt but I shall do beyond all contradiction, when the series of this discourse leads me to that particular. But,

Secondly, It is not so certain as some of our modern Infidels pretend, that the relations of the Fathers above mentioned concerning the Miracles done at the Sepulchres of the Martyrs are false and incredible. There are indeed some very (p) learned Men who think so ; and Bishop Burnet seems to give entirely into that opinion, and to secure the credit and reputation of the Fathers he imagines that ‘ some passages might have been ‘ foisted into their writings after their deaths : ’ (q) but this is an arbitrary and precarious assertion. For tho it is certain that not only many ‘ whole ‘ books have been forged in the name of Au- ‘ thors to whom they did not belong, but also

(p) *The Miracles at the Sepulchres of Holy Men then began to be boasted of, when the Christians having the power in their hands began to make an advantage of the Martyrs and other dead bodies in those Churches in which they were buried. Wherefore I would not have this argument made use of, lest we diminish from the Credibility of certain Miracles by these doubtful or fictitious ones. Every one knows how many stories are related after the 4th Century about this matter. But Origen does not mention any such Miracles, but in his 7th book against Celsus says, ‘ very many Miracles of the Holy Spirit were manifested ‘ at the beginning of Jesus’s Doctrine, and after his Ascension, ‘ but afterwaras they were fewer; however there are now some ‘ footsteps of them in some few, whose minds are purified by Reason, and their actions agreeable thereto.’ Who can believe that so many Miracles should be done in one or two Centuries after Origen, when there was less need of them ? Certainly it is as lawfull to derogate from the Credibility of the Miracles of the 4th and 5th Centuries, as it would be impudent to deny the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles. These Miracles could not be declared without danger, those could not be rejected without danzer, nor be believed without profit to those who perhaps forged them; which is a great difference. Mons. Le Clerc’s Notes on Grotius de Verit. Christ. Relig. book iii. §. 7. Vide Cave’s Primitive Christianity, lib. i. ch. 3.*

(q) Burnet, Artic. XXII. p. 243.

‘ many

‘ many parcels have been laid in among their genuine productions,’ which as the Bishop observes are not so easily to be distinguished, yet there is no good proof that these passages are of that kind, and therefore according to the true rules of criticism upon Authors they should be allowed to be genuine till the contrary is proved.

But there are two reasons given by Bishop *Burnet* why these relations of the Fathers concerning the Miracles done at the Martyrs Tombs are incredible. The first reason is, that ‘ there is no account of these Miracles given to us by the writers of the three first ages, when there was more occasion for them during the persecution than after it was over; it being much more necessary then to furnish Christians with so strong a motive as this must have been to resist even to Blood, when God was pleased so signally to glorify Himself in his Saints.’ (r) The other reason is, that ‘ St *Chrysostom* who is one of the most valuable Fathers that lived in that age, and was a very active and inquisitive man, and who spent his whole life between two of the most public scenes of the world, *Antioch* and *Constantinople*, mentions nothing at all of these great Wonders, but plainly declares that Miracles were ceased in his time, for which he gives very good reasons (s).

Now tho’ it be very true that St *Chrysostom* does assert this, yet as Archbishop *Tillotson* observes (t), ‘ this doth not contradict what St *Austin* and the other Fathers assert concerning the Miracles done at the tombs of the Martyrs.

(r) *Burnet Artic.* XXII. p. 243. (s) *Ibid.* 244.

(t) *Tillotson Vol.* iii. p. 509, 510.

• For St *Chrysostom* speaks of the living Teachers
 • and members of the Church, in whom these
 • miraculous gifts and powers were ceased; but
 • that some miraculous cures were wrought upon
 • the prayers of Christians at the tombs of the
 • Martyrs, is, says *Tillotson*, a confirmation of the
 • thing, that God designed to honour the primitive
 • Christians and Martyrs with these gifts, and not
 • to continue them to the succeeding ages of the
 • Church. And therefore, says he, God was
 • pleased that so many wonderful things should
 • be done at their sepulchres, to shew that He did
 • intend that these miraculous powers and gifts
 • should die with them, and continue no longer
 • in the living members of the Church.' From
 which passage you may observe, that the good
 Archbishop is of opinion, that these Miracles
 were really done at the sepulchres of the Mar-
 tyrs, as the Fathers assert, notwithstanding what
 Bishop *Burnet* alledges to the contrary. And
 what the Archbishop lays down in this passage,
 may furnish us with a good answer to Bishop *Bur-
 net's* first reason, *viz.* That the writers of the
 three first ages make no mention of those Mi-
 racles. For since these Miracles were wrought at
 the Martyrs tombs in honour of their memories,
 as the Archbishop observed, it seems to be very
 fit and proper that the Persecution should have
 been pretty near finished, and the number of
 Christian Martyrs well nigh compleated, before
 this honour was vouchsafed to their memories,
 since otherwise there could not have been so good
 proof made, whether they laid down their lives
 upon a true and entire principle of love to God,
 or thro' a desire of Honour and vain Glory (as
 some of the very Heathens are said to have done)
 which would quite have destroyed the merit and
 value of their Martyrdom.

But

But be this matter as it will, I think there is no good reason to doubt but that many of those Miracles said to be done at the tombs of the Martyrs were real and certain ; since, as *Grotius* (u) observes, they were so common and had so many witnesses, that they forced even *Porphyry* himself to acknowledge the Truth of them.

And since the working of Miracles remained in the Church for some ages after Christ, as the antient Fathers generally assure us (w), and Mons. *Le Clerc* in part attests the same in his citation of *Origen* just mentioned, why it might not please God to exert His Power in that particular instance of working Miracles at the Martyrs tombs as well as in several others, especially since it served to so good a purpose, and He had in former ages of the world given so remarkable an instance of the like (x), no good reason can be given.

Having observed thus much in opposition to Bishop *Burnet*'s opinion of the incredibility of these Miracles, I take the true state of the case to be this, *viz.* that many of these Miracles as related by the Fathers of the 4th age were real and certain, and I agree so far with the Bishop as to think that many of them were likewise false and counterfeit. But that which will give us the greatest light in this matter, will be to consider the state and condition of the Christian Church at this time. Now tho' the Christian Religion had by the excellency of its Doctrine, and the exemplary lives and inimitable patience of its Professors under the severest persecutions, made a very great progress in the world; yet there was a considerable number of the Gentiles

(u) *Grot. de Verit.* lib. iii. §. 7.

(x) *Vid. 2 Kings* xiii. 21.

(w) *Vid. p. 17.*

who

who were not as yet converted to the Faith ; and the zeal which the Christians had for their conversion being great and extraordinary, (especially when upon *Julian* the Emperor's turning Apostate they apprehended the danger of a relapse into Heathenism) this made some of them intent upon all methods possible to bring them over to the Christian Profession. To this purpose as *St Paul* tells us, that *he became all things to all men, that he might gain some*, 1 Cor. ix. So they thought it necessary and expedient to accommodate themselves in some little matters to the humour and inclination of the Gentiles, and since the main objection which they made against Christianity was the plainness and simplicity of it, -to introduce a little more external pomp and shew than was agreeable to its nature, the better to reconcile it to their taste and disposition. To this end perhaps it might be that some in *Palestine* began to keep Images in their houses, as *Eusebius* informs us (x). Others in *Spain* to light candles in the day-time, as the Heathens did, and to paint the walls of their Churches ; tho' the Council of *Elliberis* did so far interpose as to condemn these things (y). And as one part of the Gentile Religion, of which they were very tenacious, consisted in the worship of their inferior Gods, we find that *Theodoret*, who is one of the greatest men in all antiquity, in a Discourse wrote on purpose to cure the affections and inclinations of the *Greeks*, insists upon this particular of proposing to them the Christian Saints and Martyrs instead of their Gods (z) ; undoubtedly not designing hereby to give the least encouragement or countenance to the invoca-

(x) *Eccles. Hist.* lib. vii. cap. 17. (y) *Conc. Elibertin.*
Can. xxxiv, xxxvi. (z) *Vid. Burnet Artic.* p. 251.

tion of Saints and Martyrs, but only thinking that since the Gentiles were so absolutely and resolutely bent upon the worship of inferior Beings, the Saints and Martyrs of Christianity were much more fit and proper objects of their regard than the Heathen Gods: judging in the same manner upon this point, as an extraordinary Divine of our own Nation hath done, when speaking of the corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, he yet prefers (a) their worship of dead men, i. e. the Spirits of Christians departed to that of Heathenism. And of this compliance with the Gentiles in some of their customs and opinions, there is no doubt but they soon found considerable effects. And I make no question but they were fully perswaded that they could easily lay aside these things again whenever Christianity should be settled and established among them.

Now this method being fixed upon by some zealous Christians for the conversion of the Gentiles, it was very easy to find out a good foundation upon which the invocation of Saints and Martyrs might be built. For as the aforesaid Author well observes, it was a remnant both of Judaism and Gentilism that the souls of Martyrs hover'd about their tombs, and might be called upon and spoke to there, (b) and from

(a) *We do not say that the state of the Church of Rome with respect to the worship of dead men is as bad as Heathenism. For we acknowledge the true Saints and Martyrs to have been not only good and virtuous, but extraordinary Persons, in great favour with God, and highly deserving our esteem and reverence as well as imitation; whereas the Heathen deified men were vile and wicked men, and deserved not the common esteem of mankind according to the accounts themselves give of them.* Stillingfleet's *Answer to a Papist misrepresented and represented*, chap. ii. p. 29, 30.

(b) Burnet, *Artic.* xxii. p. 244.

this

this notion and about this time the practice of worshiping departed Spirits took its rise in the Christian Church. They first began with Martyrs at their tombs, afterwards they call'd upon them every where ; then they proceeded to pray to other Saints. Yet this as the Bishop observes did for a long time contain no more than a bare *ora pro nobis*, i. e. a desiring and requesting the Saints to pray to God for those who did thus invoke them, till at length it came to a direct application to them for their help and assistance as well as intercession, as it is directly encouraged by the *Council of Trent*, and practised by all orders of men in the Church of *Rome* ; which shews how injudicious it was in them, as well as sinful, to make an innovation in such a material part of the Christian Doctrine, and to comply with the corrupt humours and inclinations of men, in order to reconcile them to the Christian Religion.

And much more how absurd it was in them to imagine that they should ever afterwards be able to cure the Vulgar of that superstition, which they had proposed to them as the ground of their conversion. And perhaps next to the degeneracy and corruption in the lives of Christians, which gradually increased and prevailed when they had got the powers of the world on their side, there was nothing which did so manifestly hinder and obstruct the compleat conversion of the Gentile world, as the departing from the purity and perfection of the Christian Doctrine in order to comply with the corrupt humours and inclinations of mankind. Since by this means they not only weakened the force and strength of Christianity, by breaking in upon the purity and perfection of the Christian Doctrine (which to all impartial and considering

dering men will ever be an argument of its Divine Authority) but also by trusting too much to their own policy and counsel, they provoked God to withdraw His Providence and Blessing from that good work which He had begun, and carried on against all opposition, and which undoubtedly, if they had not been wanting to themselves, He would by degrees have brought to the utmost perfection. Which ought to be a warning and caution to all Churches, that how much tenderness soever they manifest to the persons of those who differ from them (and to be eminent in that particular kind of Charity is certainly a great sign and argument of a good Christian) they do not yet in compliance with the weakness or humour of any men whatever give up any essential part of the Christian Religion either in point of Faith or Practice, in order to reconcile them to their Communion.

For tho' the Church, as it is a Society, has full liberty to order things as she thinks best in matters indifferent ; yet she cannot depart in any one instance from the purity and perfection of Christ's Doctrine, without a manifest impeachment of God's Wisdom, as well as the violation of His Authority ; since God having made a revelation of His Will in the Gospel for the salvation of Mankind, He certainly must best know the fitness and expediency of every part of it in order to the obtaining that great end which He designed thereby. And we need not go any further than the Church of *Rome*, to be made sensible of the mischievous effects and consequences of violating the purity of the Christian Doctrine, the better to adapt it to the corrupt humours and inclinations of men. (c)

(c) ^E Some
the Note here referred to
is by the Printers mistake
placed on the other side of
this Leaf.

Since then this was the use which some over zealous Persons of the Church designed to make of the invocation of Saints and Martyrs, it was natural for the Christians of that age to give all encouragement possible to the reports of those Miracles which were said to be done at the Martyrs tombs. And the Fathers of the Church might the more easily be induced to give credit to many of those relations that had no sufficient foundation, since as I observed before (d) there is no doubt but they themselves knew many of them to be real and certain. And besides this they had before them a remarkable instance in the old Testament of the great and

(c) *A Cardinal Jesuit* (Palavicin. in his *Introd. to his Hist. of the Council of Trent*) going about to demonstrate the benefit and necessity of this new guide, viz. the Pope's Infallibility, gives this reason for it: 'Men, says he, must be governed as they are, and not as one could wish them to be. Now we know that Men are generally born with corrupt inclinations, and therefore the Gospel strictly taken being too rigid for corrupt nature to observe, it was necessary to constitute such a Vicar here upon Earth, as might temper Religion, and accommodate it to human Affections; and abate, remit, dispense, and give grace upon occasion, as temporal Princes do to their subjects; so that if at any time Men would not live up to the rule, the rule might ply down to them; and so God still be served, and Men kept good Catholics upon such terms as they would bear.' This is the import of what the Cardinal says more at large. And surely in this he spoke more truth than he intended; for altho' it be profane to say, that this was God's reason to constitute a Vicar (for he had no hand in the constitution) yet doubtless this was the reason that set men on work to constitute such a Vicar, that thereby they might better bring Religion to serve their carnal ends. For tho' they were pleased in an unmannerly comparison to call the Scriptures a Leaden Rule, yet they found it wanted flexibility enough to comport with their designs, and therefore the only expedient was to set up another Authority. *Dean Young's Sermons, Vol. i. p. 68, 69.*

(d) *Vid. pag. 19, 20, 21.*

uncommon regard which God Almighty paid to the remains of an eminent and extraordinary Person, *viz.* the Prophet *Elisha*. For it is said 2 Kings xiii. 21. That when they were burying a man, they espied a band of men, and they cast the man into the sepulchre of *Elisha*, and when the man was let down and touched the bones of *Elisha*, he revived and stood upon his feet.

Now tho' in matters which depend entirely upon the good will and pleasure of God, it would be monstrously unreasonable to argue from Scripture Precedents, that the like events shall hereafter be brought about by God's Providence; yet when such events are in fact found to be true, the Scripture Precedents do strangely dispose men to believe more concerning such things, than is agreeable to the strictest caution and discretion. And therefore supposing this to be the case of the ancient Fathers, that they gave more credit to the relation of Miracles done at the Martyrs sepulchres than they had good reason for, and which were perhaps made use of by some zealous Christians in their times, as pious frauds to support the doctrine of praying to them; yet I cannot see what prejudice this can bring to the belief of the reality of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, which as I intimated before do not depend upon uncertain report, but were done publickly in the face of the world, and are delivered to us by those who were eyewitnesses and observers of them.

And having been thus long in endeavouring to remove the ground of our adversaries suspicion of Christ's Miracles, as it relates to ancient times, there will be the less need of spending much time in considering what they urge from the latter ages of the Church, especially because their plea upon this point is much of the same

nature with the other, but yet more easily confuted and overthrown. Now that which they alledge upon this head to vindicate their suspicion of Christ's Miracles is this, *viz.* that the Church of *Rome* hath for some ages past pretended to an extraordinary power of working Miracles, which yet the whole world besides themselves does believe to be wholly without ground: And yet many of their chief writers do attest the truth of them in the most solemn manner; (*e*) nay and even extend this miraculous power to the very Images themselves, and affirm, that the Images of the Saints have done many wonderful Miracles, and that this is a matter beyond all controversy; * the answer to this argument is very plain and easy.

And *First*, if the Miracles of the Church of *Rome* were really wrought as is here pretended, yet by what was laid down in the beginning of this discourse (*f*) it plainly appears that they could not possibly be derived from a Divine Power, as the Miracles of Christ were, because they are wrought in confirmation of Idolatry as the worship of Saints and Images most certainly is: Or else to countenance false doctrines, and particularly that of Purgatory, which if it was not invented, as *Puffendorf* suggests, yet we cannot possibly think, that after so many unanswerable treatises which have been wrote in confutation

(*e*) *Hæc igitur omnia & alia tam multa Miracula pro iis dogmatibus quæ nunc Hæretici rident facta sunt, ut si scribi debeant, libri & volumina fine ullo numero implenda sunt. Bellarmini Conciones Lovanii habitæ, 4to p. 35. Vid. etiam p. 350, 351.*

* *Extra omnem controversiam est Sanctorum imagines mirifica designare Miracula, ut & debilibus valetudo bona per eos concilietur, &c. Durant. de ritib. Eccl. Catholic. Lib. i. Cap. 5. §. 8. Vid. Loc. (*f*) Vid. p. 10.*

thereof

thereof, and the infinite scandal which hath been given the world thereby, it is still retained for any other reason than the temporal advantages which that Church makes thereof; since, as *Puffendorf* observes, dying men who are not at that time so greedy of their wealth which they must leave to others, will be willing to part with any sums to be delivered from that hot place (g).

But *Secondly*, there is no good evidence that the Church of *Rome* hath the power of working Miracles. For, *First*, many of their most learned writers have acknowledg'd that Miracles are long since ceas'd in the Church, and are as far from giving credit to these relations of Miracles, as any of the Protestants themselves can be (h). *Secondly*, these pretended Miracles, as *Archbishop Tillotson* well observes (i), are never wrought publickly and before their adversaries, as our Blessed Saviour's Miracles were, but privately and amongst themselves, and chiefly where the power of the Inquisition rages. And as he goes on to observe all that our Divines could do in the time of our late dispute and controversy with them, they could never prevail with them to work any one Miracle in their presence for their conviction. And then, in the *Third* and last place, many of their pretended Miracles have been shamefully detected, and proved to be false and counterfeit, not only at the time of the Reformation (k) but afterwards, (l) and

(g) *Puffendorf's Introduction to the History of Europe*, p. 450.

(h) Vid. *Tillotson*, Vol. iii. p. 511. (i) *Ibid.* p. 512.

(k) *It may not be amiss to give an instance or two of this matter. Thus in the beginning of the Reformation, A. D. 1537. the reformers discovered many impostures about Relicks and wonderful Images to which pilgrimages had been wont to be made. At Reading they had an Angel's wing which brought over*

and not only by Protestants who have discovered them, but even by their own Bishops (m). So that there is no proof at all, that the Church of Rome as peculiarly so called ever had a power of

over the spear's point that pierced our Saviour's side. As many pieces of the Cross were found as joined together would have made a big Cross. The Rood of Grace at Boxley in Kent, had been much esteemed, and drawn many Pilgrims to it; it was observed to bow and roll it's eyes, and look at times well pleased or angry, which the credulous multitude imputed to a Divine Power. But all this was discovered to be a Cheat, and it was brought up to St Paul's Cross; and all the springs were openly shew'd that governed it's several motions. At Hales in Gloucestershire, the blood of Christ was shew'd in a vial; and it was believed that none could see it who were in mortal sin; and so after good presents were made the deluded Pilgrims went away well satisfied if they had seen it. This was the blood of a Duck renewed every week, put in a vial very thick on one side and as thin on the other, and either side turned towards the Pilgrims, as the Priests were satisfied with their oblations. Several other such like impostures were discovered which contributed much to the undeceiving the people. Burnet's Abridgment of his History of the Reformation, 8vo Lib. i. p. 200, 201.

(l) (m) In times and places where their (the Popish) religion did most absolutely bear sway, and few or none durst oppose it, and where the doctrines which they pretended to confirm by these Miracles were most generally believ'd, as in those long, dark and ignorant times before the Reformation and now in Italy and Spain, where the Inquisition forceth them all to be of one belief, or to profess to be so: In these times and places where there was least need and occasion for Miracles, then and there did they most abound; even more (if we may believe their Histories) for several Ages before the Reformation than in the times of our Saviour and his Apostles. But since the Reformation, and that many of their doctrines are called in question, and disbelieved, Miracles are grown rare, and almost ceased even in the Popish countries; and they have had but very ill success with those few they have pretended to; witness the Miracle at Angiers in France of a Child appearing over the Altar in the time of Mass, to convince all people of the doctrine of Transubstantiation, with which the Papists made such a noise here in England about fourteen or fifteen years ago, and which at last was discovered to be

of working Miracles ; and much less can any account of their pretended Miracles in any wise derogate from the truth and reality of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, as they are recorded in the Gospel, and wrought with the circumstances beforementioned. And this may suffice in answer to those who question and suspect the reality of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, I proceed to consider the argument of those who directly and positively deny the truth of them.

Now the only person that I know of, who hath professedly wrote against the truth of Christ's Miracles considered as facts, is Mr *Woolston*, a person whose writings are not less remarkable for their absurdity than their impiety. For I do not find that Mr *Hobbs* denied the truth of the Scripture Miracles (n). Or that the most considerable of our modern Infidels did ever disown them to be real facts, tho' they endeavoured to find out other ways to withstand the authority and conviction of them. Of which more hereafter.

In defending the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour against the arguments of Mr *Woolston*, I shall follow this method. *First*, I shall lay before the Reader, the doctrine of this Author concerning Christ's Miracles. And then, *Secondly*, shall offer to his consideration some clear and plain arguments, which will manifest the great absurdity and unreasonableness thereof.

And *First*, as to the doctrine of Mr *Woolston* concerning the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour.

an artificial juggle and contrivance of some cunning Priest, and published to the world for a cheat by the honest and worthy Bishop of that place. *Tillotson Vol. iii. p. 512.*

The fraud of the Miracle of melting St Januarius's blood at Naples, upon which the Papists insist so much at present, with other things of the like nature are taken notice of in Dr Middleton's Letter from Rome.

(n) *Vid. Leviath. cap. xxxvii.*

Now

Now this Author doth not in any part of his discourses on this subject deny the authority of the Holy Scripture ; and therefore as he allows it to be a true history, we are not put upon the proof of it's divine authority against him. But allowing the Gospel to be a true history, he is not content to argue against the Miracles of our Saviour considered as such, but which is very strange and shocking to common sense and understanding, he denies them to be real facts ; and endeavours to prove that they are only Parables, or parabolical and prophetical narrations of what the Spiritual Jesus or Messiah should perform in the latter ages of the Church. And by the Spiritual Jesus or Messiah, as he asserts on the pretended authority of the ancient Fathers (whom he hath grossly and most shamefully abused in that particular) is meant nothing else but clear truth, right reason, and divine wisdom, which he says will descend upon the Church to remove her unprofitable errors, and to enable her to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit against the grand Sabbath (o). So that the plain meaning of his doctrine is this, that those miraculous cures and other wonderful operations which are in the Gospel attributed to Jesus Christ, were not really done by him as they are there represented to be, but are only parables or descriptions of the spiritual redemption of mankind from the power of sin and error, and the restoring them to original righteousness and virtue which shall be accomplished in the latter ages of the Church, by the exercise of right reason and divine wisdom. And as he thus trifles egregiously with his reader, in putting a

(o) Woolston's *Discourses on our Saviour's Miracles*, part iii. p. 24.

fantastical sense upon the word Jesus or Messiah, so is he not any more consistent with himself in his main hypothesis. For tho' in general he denies the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour to be real facts, yet in some particulars in which *he thinks* he hath the advantage in point of circumstance he seems willing to allow them to be real facts, and endeavours to prove that they were not miraculous, but were entirely owing to other causes, of which we shall take more notice hereafter. And thus much concerning the doctrine of Mr *Woolston* about the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour. I proceed now in the *Second* place to offer some clear and plain arguments, which will manifest the great absurdity and unreasonableness thereof.

In doing which it is not my design to defend the circumstances of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles from the unreasonable exceptions which this person hath made against them, many of which are entirely founded in his ignorance of ancient history and other parts of learning. For this would be a very long work, and hath been already fully done by a learned Bishop of our Church, and by other writers, to the compleat satisfaction of all wise and impartial men. And besides if the difficulty of accounting for some of the circumstances of our Saviour's Miracles were never so great, yet the proving the truth and reality of those Miracles will in my judgment demonstrate that our Saviour was *a teacher sent from God*, and consequently will fully vindicate the fitness and propriety of the several circumstances which he used therein ; and much less do I think it worth the while to take notice of that ridicule and buffoonery with which he hath handled this grave subject, nor of that unparalleled prophaneness and blasphemy with which he hath

treated the Person of our Blessed Saviour : which are the chief qualifications that have rendered his discourses agreeable to the taste of so many persons in this vicious and corrupt age. For banter is incapable of being answered by argument, and the gravest and most sacred persons or subjects may easily be ridiculed by being represented in false lights and improper colours ; and I know of no effectual way to confute blasphemy, but by due censure and punishment, which if it does not always meet with in this world, yet for my own part I will not be much disturb'd and disquieted thereat, since I know there is a day coming when all profaneness and blasphemy shall be severely animadverted upon, and when God will do right to Himself and His own Perfections, and fully vindicate the Honour and Dignity of His Beloved Son. But all that I design at present is to enter into the merits of the cause, and by a few plain and clear arguments to prove that our Blessed Saviour's Miracles were facts really done by Him, which will wholly remove the ground upon which Mr *Woolston*'s main hypothesis is built and established. The arguments which I shall bring to this purpose are these following.

First, The Miracles of our Blessed Saviour are represented in Scripture to be real facts. The design of the four Gospels is to give us a clear and plain account of the Life, Actions, Death, and Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour ; and that part of them which treats of His Miracles is as much delivered to us for real history as any of the rest. Now it is an eternal rule in criticism, in which all learned men are agreed, that in the perusal of any Author we are always to follow the literal sense, unless there be a plain Metaphor in the expression, or the nature and design of the discourse clearly shews it to be a Parable.

Parable. And indeed the difference between Metaphors and Parables, and the literal sense and meaning of any discourse, is so very obvious and easy to be perceived, that in the judgment of all writers every person of common understanding is left to himself, and thought sufficient to make the distinction. Who sees not that the Books of the Old Testament are delivered to us as real history, and who among us would not be ashamed of himself, if he should not be thought able to distinguish between the literal History of King *David*, and that parabolical narrative, in which the Prophet *Nathan* so justly condemned him for his notorious transgression in the matter of *Uriah*? 2 *Sam.* xii. And yet I would fain know by what greater evidence it appears, that the Old Testament is a real history than that the Gospel is so. Or indeed to speak more home to the purpose, if the Gospel of Christ be not designed as a real history, I would willingly be informed by what rules and marks we shall ever be able to distinguish any real history. And it is a vain pretence in Mr *Woolston* to seem willing to allow the Gospel to be a real history, when at the same time he takes the liberty of explaining away every thing which he does not like, and turning it into Allegory and Parable, tho' as will be more plainly seen presently, it is equally real and historical with any other part of that Book.

And indeed had Mr *Woolston* dealt with any ancient history either *Greek* or *Roman* in the same manner that he hath done with the Holy Gospel, he would have been long since abandoned and exploded by all men, and it would have been justly concluded that he was mad himself, or that he thought his readers were so. Let us for example sake suppose that Mr *Woolston* allowing

the *Roman history* of *Livy* or *Dionysius Halicarnass.* or any other of their writers to be a real and genuine history, had declared that the chief and principal actions in those histories were not delivered to us for real facts, as they are there said to be, but are only Parables; as for instance that the heroic action of *Regulus* in laying down his life at *Carthage* rather than his country should make a dishonourable peace; or the brave and generous behaviour of the *Decii* in voluntarily exposing themselves to death as the only means in their opinion of preserving their armies, (p) were not real facts as the *Roman history* represents them, but were only parabolical significations of that great love to their country which men should shew for it in the latter ages of the world, by laying down their lives for its preservation: I say, had Mr *Woolston* took the *Roman history* for the subject of his drollery and treated it in this manner, I doubt he would have found it as hard a

(p) *In the war against the Latins* (circ. ann. U. C. 412.) *upon certain dreams and prognostications that the General on one side and the Army on the other was certainly to be destroyed;* the *Consuls* solemnly agreed, that in what part the *Roman army* should be distressed, the commander of that part should devote himself to the gods, and die for his country: which generous resolution was confirm'd by oath. Both armies being drawn up in *Battalia*, a bloody and obstinate engagement immediately followed, and the *Latins* pressing very hard upon *Decius's* part, he according to his promise devoted himself to the gods, and rushing violently into the midst of his enemies after a great slaughter lost his life, the *Latins* being soon after entirely defeated. Above fourty years after this, the *Samnites* received a most dreadful overthrow by the *Consuls* *Fabius Maximus* and *Decius Mus.* In the midst of this fight *Decius* seeing his party retire and in danger of being defeated, he followed the great example of his Father and most solemnly devoted himself to the gods; then rushing into the midst of the enemy with an extraordinary fury and courage, he recovered his army but with the loss of his life. *Echard's Roman History*, Vol. i. p. 158, 168.

matter

matter to have convinced any among us of the truth of his Parable, as it would be to perswade himself or any of his friends to the application of it. And yet I cannot imagine what greater evidence can be had to prove the *Roman* affairs to be a real history, than what may easily be alledged to the same purpose in behalf of the Gospel. So that this is the *first* consideration, and there is great strength and force in it, *viz.* that those parts of the Gospel, which treat of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, are represented to us as a real history, and they cannot without manifest absurdity and the greatest violence to the common sense of mankind be judged otherwise.

But, *Secondly*, there is a manifest difference made even in the Gospel it self between the Parables of our Blessed Saviour and the history of his Miracles. For not to mention what the Evangelists continually observe, that when our Blessed Saviour spake to the *Jews* in Parables, it is said, that He spake a Parable to them to this or that end or purpose, there is this plain difference between them and the history of facts as related in the Gospel. The Parables are either designed for the more effectual method of reproofing men for their sins and mistakes, because by throwing the argument into general history the private caution and reserve of the offender was entirely taken away. And by this means *David* was caught by *Nathan* in the Parable. And by the same method our Blessed Saviour frequently entangled and convinced the *Jews*, who would never have been brought to give judgment against themselves, if they had foreseen that they were the very Persons concern'd. (q) Or else they are

(q) Luke vii. 36. to the end. Matth. xxi. 28. to 32.

brought

brought in for the more clear illustration and confirmation of some doctrine or precept which is commonly mentioned in the context, and upon which the Parable is entirely grounded. An instance or two of this may not be improper; thus in the Parable of the Lord and his Servants, *Matth. xviii.* it is introduced by St Peter's question to our Saviour, ver. 21. *Lord how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?* after our Saviour had answered this question in the verse following, *I say not unto thee, until seven times: but until seventy times seven.* He immediately begins the Parable in which He gives an account of the behaviour of the Lord to his Servant, first in forgiving him a very large debt, and then in punishing him very severely for his unmerciful treatment of his fellow Servant for an inconsiderable debt which he owed to him. Then the Parable concludes, and our Blessed Saviour draws this observation from it, for the sake of which chiefly the Parable was brought in, *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses, ver. ult.* The same likewise is the case of the Parable of the good *Samaritan*; the occasion of it was this, our Blessed Saviour had been instructing a certain lawyer in the two great duties of religion, the Love of God and the Love of our Neighbour, *Luke x. 25, &c.* upon which he being *willing to justify himself*, says unto our Saviour ver. 29. *And who is my neighbour?* For his better instruction in which particular our Saviour goes on with the Parable of the good *Samaritan*, which every one knows too well to need any repetition of it. And after the Parable is ended, our Blessed Saviour asks the Lawyer, *which of these three be thought was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?* and when he

he made answer, *he that shewed mercy upon him,* then replies our Saviour to him, *Go, and do thou likewise,* ver. 36, 37. and this is the case of the rest of our Blessed Saviour's Parables. By which it plainly appears that they are not represented in the Gospel as historical facts, but only according to the genius of the eastern nations, who delighted in them (r) as ingenious and affecting methods of instructing men in divine and moral truths. Whereas the Miracles of our Blessed Lord were quite different; they are related as independent parts of the Gospel History. They seldom have any connexion with the foregoing or subsequent parts of the history, and they were done upon particular and unexpected occasions, as they happened to present themselves. They were generally brought about after this manner. As our Blessed Saviour was travelling to such or such a city or town, or abiding therein, such and such persons who were diseased were presented to Him, and He healed them. Examples of this are so very frequent and common, that 'tis impossible for any one who reads the Gospel to be unacquainted with them. However it will be very proper and necessary to mention two or three instances of this matter, because it will give great light and strength to the present argument. Thus if we turn to the ninth chapter of St Matthew, we shall find that after our Blessed Saviour had departed from the coasts of the *Gergesenes* mentioned in the former chapter, it is said in the first verse of this, *that he entered into a ship and passed over and came into his own city.* In the next verse *they bring unto him a man sick of the palsey, lying upon a bed;* and after He had told him that his sins were forgiven him, and the

(r) Vid. Dr Goodman's *Penitent Pardon'd*, cap. i.

Scribes, who murmured upon that occasion, were reprehended by Him, ver. 3, 4, 5. At ver. 6. He cured him of his Palsie, and bid him go to his house, which he did accordingly, ver. 7. And then it is said *when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men*, ver. 8. Here the history of the Miracle is finished.

Immediately after this, at ver. 9. follows the calling of St Matthew to be a Disciple, and other historical matters till you come to ver. 18. then the history of another Miracle begins, which was this. A certain Ruler came to Him and worshipped Him, saying, *my daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.* And in the following verses it is said, that our Saviour went to the Ruler's house, and restored his daughter to life again. And in his passage thither it was, that the *woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment*, and was cured immediately. After this from ver. 27, to 35. there is an account of two other Miracles of our Lord, *viz.* His restoring two blind men to their sight, and casting a Devil out of one that was dumb, together with the blasphemous judgment of the *Pharisees* upon that occasion. And then at ver. 35. there is mention made of our Blessed Saviour's going thro' their cities and villages, and preaching in their Synagogues, and his great concern for the multitude, because they were destitute of a sufficient number of true Pastors; together with His command to his Disciples, that they should pray to God to send *labourers into his harvest.* And thus the chapter ends, and the tenth chapter begins with the calling of the twelve Apostles. Now if these Miracles which are here mentioned are not related as real facts

in history, I would fain know of what use and signification they can be; they are not brought in as the Parables to clear up and illustrate any religious truth, neither is there any practical inference or observation drawn from them; but they are recorded in the most plain and simple manner that can be, and mixed and interspersed among the other undoubted parts of the Gospel History. And therefore if they are not real matters of fact in history, they cannot possibly be any thing else than useless and idle tales without any design or importance. And whether any thing which Mr *Woolston* hath said upon this subject can prevail with any among us, to entertain so mean an opinion of these relations of our Blessed Saviour, who was infinite and essential Wisdom itself, let every one judge for himself.

Thirdly. That which will further prove and demonstrate that the Miracles of Christ are real facts, is this consideration, *viz.* that our Blessed Saviour frequently urges them as proofs of His Divine authority and commission, which they could not possibly be, if they had not been facts really done by Him. Thus when *John* the Baptist sent his Disciples to our Blessed Saviour to enquire of him whether he was the true Messiah, He used no other argument but this, *Go shew John again those things which ye do bear and see, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, &c.* *Matth.* xi. 1, to 6. and again our Saviour says of the Jews, *If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin.* *John* xv. 24. And to mention no more, our Blessed Saviour pronounces a most terrible woe and judgment upon some of the Jewish cities, because they were not prevailed upon to repent by those many Miracles which He had

wrought among them. Thus, *wo unto thee Chorazin, wo unto thee Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* Matth. xi. 23. The same judgment He pronounces upon the city of *Capernaum*, ver. 23. and says that *if the mighty works which were done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day.* This surely is a demonstration that these works were really done in those cities, or else our Blessed Saviour could never have made them an argument that the obstinacy and perverseness of the Jews was greater than that of *Tyre and Sidon*, and *Sodom* would have been in the like circumstances. Whereas if according to Mr *Woolston* they were only parabolical descriptions of what the Messiah should do in the latter ages of the Church, then the argument must have run thus, *wo unto thee Chorazin, &c. for if the mighty works which shall be done in thee about two thousand years hence (suppose) had been done in Tyre and Sidon, or in Sodom, they would have repented long ago.* Where, I beseech you, was the force of this argument? and might not the Jews have reasonably desired and expected to have seen our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, before they should be required to repent of their sins in virtue of them? The argument therefore, as it is placed in this light, is absolute nonsense.

And thus it is that Mr *W.* has presum'd to treat the Gospel of Christ, and indeed if the Evangelists had made such a representation as this of Christ's Miracles, this author needed not to have taken the pains he hath done to ridicule them; for they would have sufficiently exposed themselves, and the Gospel of Christ instead of convincing mankind and overcoming the powers of the world

world, as it really did by its own *nature*, force, and evidence, would have been neglected and forgotten many ages since, and exploded as a system of the greatest absurdity and confusion. It is impossible for Mr *W.* ever to evade the force of this argument, and if he will still obstinately insist upon it, that the works with which our Saviour reproached the Jewish cities were not Miracles, or facts really done in them, but only parables, (which from what has been said before it appears plainly they cannot be) yet even this will be of much greater disservice to his cause than he imagines; since if barely the parables which our Blessed Saviour uttered were so excellent, as that they would have prevail'd upon *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and *Sodom*, to repent of their abominable sins and vices, this would be as great a Miracle as we can well imagine, and a clear proof and evidence that our Blessed Saviour was a Divine Person and came from God.

There is one thing to which Mr *W.* retreats upon this head, tho' it will not do him the least service, *viz.* That it is the nature of prophecy to speak of things to come as if they were past (*s*); from which he would infer, that the Miracles of Christ, tho' they are represented in the Gospel as things past and done, may be nothing but predictions. But not to mention that this is equally an argument against the truth and reality of any historical facts, as it is against the account which the Gospel gives of Christ's Miracles, which are related with the same evidence of their being facts, as any other facts ever were or can be (*t*); I say, to pass by this, the observation itself which Mr *W.* here makes is mere trifling and impertinence; for there is a manifest

(*s*) *Discourse* iii. p. 16.

(*t*) *Ibid.* p. 32.

difference between the style of Scripture in matters of Prophecy and those of History, such as I have fully shewn the Miracles of Christ to be. In the former, the Prophets observe no strict rule in forming of their style; sometimes, according to the genius of the Jewish religion, they express the affairs of Christ's kingdom in their own persons. Thus holy *David* speaks in his own person of the sufferings of the *Messiah*, and of his death and resurrection. *Psal. xxii. Psal. xvi. 10.* And as these matters were represented to the Prophets by way of vision, it was natural and almost unavoidable for them to speak of them as things present; and yet it was usual with them to vary and change their style when they were speaking of the same thing, as we may particularly observe in the 53d Chapter of *Isaiah*, which relates to the death and sufferings of the *Messias*, where the Prophet first speaks of Christ in the present tense, *he is despised and rejected of men*, ver. 3. afterwards in the preterimperfect, *he was wounded for our transgressions*, ver. 5. and then in the future tense, *he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, &c. he shall bear their iniquities*, ver. 11. which I am sure is not speaking in the style of things past, and indeed it would have been a very needless thing to have mentioned this matter, if Mr *W.* had not insisted upon it.

Fourthly and lastly. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (which is the greatest Miracle of our Religion, and fully proves the truth of all the rest) (u) is a demonstration of the reality of Christ's Miracles. This Mr *W.* fully perceives, and therefore he hath used his utmost endeavours, in the person of his Jewish rabbi, to render it absurd and incredible. Now that Jesus

(u) See the *Miracles of Jesus vindicated, part I.*

Christ was put to death under *Pontius Pilate*, we are not only assured from the four Gospels, and from (w) *Tacitus* the *Roman* historian, but Mr *W.* himself allows it, and that with a most peculiar circumstance, viz. that He suffered justly and deservedly for his own crimes (x). If then our Blessed Saviour really rose from the dead, here is an undoubted matter of fact, and an unquestionable miracle; and that He did so, we have sufficient evidence of scripture, which Mr *W.* does not disown: for He not only rose from the dead the third day (y) according to His prediction, but He appeared several times to His disciples, *1 Cor. xv.* and at one time to five hundred brethren, *ver. 4, 6.* and to put the reality of His human body beyond all reasonable doubt, He suffered it to be felt and handled by *Thomas* the unbelieving Apostle, *Job. xx. 27.* and did eat in the presence of all the Apostles, *Luke xxiv. 42, 43.* and after He had conversed with them for the space of forty days, He visibly in their sight ascended into heaven, *ver. 57.* and afterwards according to his promise *ver. 44.* He sent down the *Holy Ghost* upon them, *A&ts ii.* Now if all this be not to those who acknowledge the truth of the Gospel (which at present is not disputed between us) a sufficient evidence of Christ's resurrection, we must for ever despair to know the sense and meaning of words, and it will be impossible for us ever to receive any proof and evidence at all in matters of religion; and after all the great boasts which we have made to the Papists of the clearness as well as perfection of the Holy Scriptures, we may at last bid welcome to

(w) *Annal. lib. xv.* (x) *Woolston's sixth Disc. p. 5.*

(y) *Vid. Pearson on the Creed. Artic. 5. p. 261, 262, 263. Miracles of Jesus vindicated, part i. p. 11. to 15.*

Catholic tradition ; since if there be not in the Gospel a certain proof and demonstration of Christ's resurrection, it is without all doubt the most difficult and obscure book in the whole world : and whether it be reasonable and prudent in the great patrons and advocates of liberty among us, to give the Papists so great an advantage as this acknowledgment must be, merely to gratify the taste of prophane and licentious wits *, I leave it to themselves to judge. And there is nothing which Mr *W.* has objected to the Scripture account of our Saviour's resurrection, but what is so very trifling and impertinent, that it does not deserve to have the least notice taken of it, excepting only these two things, 1st, That our Saviour could not be said to rise from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures testify (which is a point that Mr *W.* must know hath been fully answered and cleared up by many learned men (z). And 2^{dly}, that Christ appeared after His resurrection only to chosen witnesses, as the Apostle observes *Act*s x. 41. and not to all the people of the Jews, as Mr *W.* in the person of his Jewish rabbi earnestly contends He ought to have done, if He had designed to satisfy them of

* Above all, the greatest and most effectual means which we can possibly use to prevent the growth of Popery and superstition, is to be infinitely careful not to run into that Atheism and profane libertinism which is the contrary extreme to superstition; for as unreasonable superstition enslaves the minds of men, and makes them so uneasy under the yoke, that they often fly off into the contrary extreme of irreligion and profaneness; so the natural effect of profaneness, when men see the intolerable consequences and mischiefs of it, is to drive weak minds into the other extreme of superstition. If therefore while we fly from the superstition of Popery, we run into the contempt of all religion, that profane libertinism will probably terminate in Popery again. Dr S. Clarke's Serm. Vol. vi. p. 388.

(z) Vid. p. 45.

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the truth of His resurrection. But tho' Mr *W.* has dress'd up this latter objection with all the art and insinuation that he is master of, yet I would not have him think that he is the author of it; for it was urg'd above 1500 years ago by *Celsus* the famous *Epicurean*, against whom *St Origen* wrote, and hath been fully answered by many Christian writers both antient and modern (a); but however that matter may be, it only concerns the wisdom and conduct of our Saviour (in which any one who reads impartially the discourse of Dr *Clagett* on that subject will be fully satisfied) and not the truth and reality of his resurrection, which is the only thing we have at present under consideration; and as to the truth of that, we may with as much reason deny that there is such a person as Jesus Christ mentioned in the Gospel, as that He rose from the dead. And thus I have fully proved that the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour were facts really done by Him, and thereby removed the main foundation of Mr *W.*'s reasoning against them. I proceed now

Secondly. To consider some exceptions which he hath made to them considered as facts. For I observ'd before, that tho' this author's main hypothesis consists in denying them to be real facts; yet in some of our Blessed Lord's Miracles, where he thinks he hath the advantage in point of circumstance, he drops his main argument, and is willing to allow them to be real facts, in order to shew that there was nothing truly miraculous in them. The exceptions, which Mr *W.* hath taken against them considered as facts, are

(a) But that which in my judgment is the best of all that hath been written on this subject, is an excellent discourse of the late judicious Dr *Clagett*, and published not long since among his posthumous sermons by his Brother; and is highly deserving of any man's reading.

these

these two; *First*, he supposes that the miraculous cures, which our Blessed Saviour is said in the Gospel to perform, might be owing to the strength of fancy and imagination in the patients. This is the account which he gives of that wonderful cure, (b) which was wrought upon the woman that had an issue of blood twelve years by the bare touching the hem of Christ's garment, *Mattb.* ix. 20, &c. and perhaps he could not have found many instances in the Gospel more unlucky to his purpose, as we shall see presently; but since Mr. *W.* insists upon it, and others of our modern infidels have given into it, I shall therefore consider it more distinctly. And,

1st. It is a matter of great doubt among learned men, whether any real distemper of the body is capable of being cured by the mere strength of fancy and imagination; there are some persons who think it possible in some few cases, and particularly in the *King's-Evil*; but if it be possible in this case, as these persons assert, yet what an excellent Author observes upon this occasion (c) will hold true, *viz.* that such persons did never find themselves cured immediately by the power of their fancy, when it first exerted its force upon them; but only that they then began to amend, and that their distemper did afterwards wear off by degrees; and therefore this cannot be the least prejudice to the cure of the person I am now speaking of, which was wrought perfectly and at once by the bare touch of Christ's garment. But

2dly. There are other very learned persons, who think that the force of imagination or fancy is not sufficient to cure any real distemper

(b) *Discourse* ii. p. 15.

(c) *Miracles of Jesus vindicated*, p. iv. p. 24, 25.

whatever.

whatever. *Fienus*, an eminent Physician of the last age mentioned by Bishop *Smalbroke* (d), who hath published an entire treatise of the force of imagination upon the animal oeconomy (and who certainly must be the best judge in things of this nature) lays it down as a conclusion which he supports with many good reasons, that the fancy cannot of it self cure any diseases, even those which are most plain and simple, some of which he there instances in; and I believe upon examination it would be found, that the most learned of his profession are of the same mind.

3dly. Whatever may be the force of fancy in some particular cases, yet the cure of the person we are now speaking of cannot possibly be ascribed to it, as is evident from these two considerations: 1st. That many of the most learned Physicians (e), who have wrote distinctly concerning the diseases mentioned in the Gospel, do acknowledge that the case of this woman was quite desperate and absolutely incurable by any human means, and much less then surely by the bare strength of fancy and imagination. And 2dly. This is clear and evident from the condition and circumstances of this person, as they are related to us in the Gospel. For 1st. She had been troubled with this distemper for the space of twelve years, which manifests the strength and inveteracy thereof. *Mark* v. 25. And then 2dly. She had suffered many things of many Physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing better, but rather grew worse, v. 26. and as a great Author judiciously observes, it is not reasonable to think that she would have spent all her living upon the Physicians, and suffered

(d) *Vindication*, p. 291. (e) *Ader, Bartholine, &c. cited by Bishop Smalbroke, Vindicat.* p. 277, to 281.

many things, or have gone thro' severe courses of Physick as prescribed by them, if she had not formed a good opinion at least of some of them, and fancied she should recover her health by their advice (f). So that if the power of fancy could have wrought this cure, it must have been done long before the time that she came to our Saviour. And he that can conceive it possible for the power of fancy to stop an issue of blood of twelve years standing, which had baffled all the art and advice of learned Physicians, must himself be endued with such a strength of fancy, as is peculiar to those who have lost their sense and understanding. But

4thly and lastly. To put this matter out of all possible doubt, and to shew that the miracles of our Blessed Saviour were not in the least owing to fancy and imagination, the Gospel hath given us an account of several of those Miracles, which were performed on persons upon whom fancy and imagination could not possibly have the least influence, such as the curing the Centurion's servant of the palsey at *Capernaum*, tho' our Saviour did not go into the house where he was, which the Scripture tells us was done upon the account of the Centurion's faith, and therefore could not be owing to the servant's fancy ; and likewise our Saviour's raising up the Nobleman's child in the same city, that was at the point of death, tho' our Blessed Saviour did not approach near to him, which was done by reason of his father's faith. *Matth. viii. 5, &c. Job. iv. 46, &c.* and particularly our Blessed Saviour's giving sight to the blind, and chiefly to one that was born blind, *Job. ix.* and his raising the dead to life again. *Luk. vii. 11, &c. Job. xi.* All which instances are

(f) *Bishop Smalbroke's Vindication, p. 281.*

absolute demonstrations of the vanity and falsehood of Mr *W.*'s suggestion, that the Miracles of Christ are to be ascrib'd to the power of fancy and imagination.

And having said thus much to this suggestion of Mr *W.* there will be the less necessity of dwelling long upon another objection he hath made to the reality of Christ's Miracles, because it is much of the same nature with that which I have just now considered. And this is taken from that passage of the Gospel, where it is said, that when our Blessed Saviour came into his own countrey about *Capernaum*, *He could do there no mighty work.* Mark vi. 5. from whence Mr *W.* infers (g), that our Saviour could do nothing against unbelief. But this objection is none of Mr *W.*'s own, tho' he seems to be so fond of it ; for it was urg'd long ago by *Vaninus Cæsar* the famous Atheist, who was burnt for Atheism at *Tholouse* in *France*, A. D. 1619. and who argued from this text, as other Atheists have since done out of him, that credulity and a strong imagination in the people were the main ingredients in our Saviour's Miracles, and where *He did not meet with persons so dispos'd*, *He could do no great matter* (b).

But now these persons have not only miserably perverted this text of Scripture, but have argued very absurdly and unreasonably from it. For 1st. when St *Mark* says that our Saviour could not do any mighty works there, the words *could not* are not to be understood to signify any natural incapacity or want of power in our Saviour ; for surely it was as easy for Him to work Miracles in that country, as in other places. But the expression is to be understood in a moral

(g) *Dist.* ii, p. 15. (b) *Vid. Tillotson Vol. iii. p. 546.*

sense, as implying that our Saviour was not willing and inclined at that time, or that He had not sufficient reason and encouragement given Him to work Miracles. And in this sense the expression is used in our own language *, there being nothing more common than for men to say, that they cannot do this or that thing, which they have yet a natural power to do; but the meaning is, they cannot do it consistently with their state and condition and circumstances, or without doing themselves some considerable harm and injury, &c. and there are many places of Scripture in which the expression is used in the same sense. I will mention only two which are incontestable. Thus Gen. xxxvii. 4. it is said of Joseph's brethren, that when they *saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.* This sure was not a natural impossibility, but the meaning is, they *could not speak peaceably unto him, so long as they retain'd in their minds that*

* He could do no mighty works, i. e. He would do none, because of their unbelief. There is a frequent change of those words in all languages in the world. And we may appeal with St Chrysostom to the common custom of speech whatever country we live in. Τέτο οὐ καὶ κοινῆ συνθεῖσι φυλακτόμων οὐδε τίς οὐδε: so οὐρανός is volo, Acts iv. 20. Job. vii. 7. and οὐδε is possum. Vid. Budæ Comm. L. Gr. This therefore is the genuine sense of that expression; Christ would not heal their infirmities, because of the hardness and stowness of the hearts in that they believed him not. And I think there is not one instance in all the history of the New Testament of a Miracle done for any one's sake that did not believe Jesus to be a good Person and sent from God, &c.—and as to the healing of Malchus's ear it was a peculiar and extraordinary case, for tho' the person was wholly unworthy of so gracious a cure, yet in the account of the meek Lamb of God, it was a kind of injury done to him by the servidess of St Peter, who knew not yet what Spirit He was of, and that his master's kingdom was not of this world.

Dr Bentley's 6th Serm. at Boyle's Lectures, 4^{to} p. 9, 10.

wicked

wicked disposition of hatred towards him. So likewise when the Jewish Council had forbid the Apostles to preach any more in the name of Jesus, Peter and John declare their resolution to oppose their commands, and make use of this saying, *we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Acts iv. 20. which certainly does not signify that they could not have been silent, as the Jewish Magistrates desired them, for that was very easily in their power; but the sense is, they could not be silent consistently with their duty to God, and the obligation of preaching the Gospel which they had laid themselves under. To which I will add a very remarkable passage of Holy Scripture, where the very same manner of expression is used of Almighty God himself; thus Gen. xix. 22. God says to Lot, *Haste thee escape thither (to Zoar) for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.* Evidently, as a learned * Author well observes, not for want of power, but consistently with his present purposes and designs; consistently with His rule and method of acting, He could not do these things. And if Mr W. would have consulted Mr Hobbs upon this occasion, he would have informed him, that for any man to say, that our Saviour did not many works in that place because He wanted power, were blasphemy against God (i). But 2dly, it is not true which these objectors alledge, that our Blessed Saviour did no mighty works in this place. For St Matthew in the account of this matter expresses it thus; *He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* chap. 13. ult. which plainly intimates that He did some. And when St Mark says in the place abovementioned, that

* Dr Clarke's Serm. Vol. ix. p. 58.

(i) Hobbs's Leviath. fol. cb. 37. p. 235.

He could do no mighty work there, he immediately makes an exception, He could do there, says he, no mighty work, save that He laid His bands upon a few sick folk, and healed them; and a little before this in the second verse of the same chapter, we find that the multitude was astonished, not only upon the account of His divine and excellent doctrine which He had taught them, but also because such mighty works were wrought by His hands. So that it is very plain and evident that our Blessed Saviour did several mighty works in that place, tho' not so many as He was used and accustomed to do in others. And in this sense, as I take it, the expression in that text is to be understood, *i. e.* comparatively. He did not do so many mighty works in that place, as He commonly did in others. And what was the reason of it? Was it because He wanted power? No surely. That is Mr W.'s profane and impious suggestion; but the Scripture tells us, it was because of their unbelief. Matth. xviii. ult. they were not endued with a true faith in Him, which was the ground and reason upon which He wrought His Miracles; neither were they prevailed upon by those Miracles which He had perform'd already, to acknowledge Him to be the true *Messias*. But they were prejudiced against Him, upon account of the meanness of His birth and parentage. *Is not this, say they, the Carpenter's son?* is not His mother called *Mary*? and His brethren *James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?* and his sisters are they not all with us? whence then hath this man all these things? and they were offended in Him. Matth. xiii. 55, &c. so that since they were of such a perverse and obstinate disposition, as not to be prevail'd upon by the Divinity of our Saviour's doctrine, and the several Miracles which He had already wrought among them, to acknowledge Him

Him to be the Christ, it was a manifest sign of grace and compassion in Him, not to work any more Miracles in that place, since they would have had no other effect upon them, but only to inflame their crime, and aggravate their infidelity. And if Mr *W.* had not been endued with a great deal of ill nature, as well as malice against Christ, he would never have made that an argument of the want of power in our Saviour, which was plainly an argument of His goodness and mercy. And so much for Mr *W.*'s first exception to our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, *viz.* that they were owing to the force of imagination and credulity.

I proceed now to consider the second exception, which he hath made against them, and that is, that they were owing to the operation of natural causes (*k*). This is the account which he gives of that miraculous cure wrought on the man that was born blind, of which we read *Job. ix.* for whereas it is said in *ver. 6.* that *Jesus spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.* Mr *W.* asserts that this affects the credit of the Miracle, and gives occasion of suspicion that it was art and not a Divine Power that healed him, or *Jesus* for His honour had never had recourse to the use of those means (*l*). And he further insinuates, that our Blessed Saviour under-hand

(*k*) *Naturali vi non fuisse patrata quæ diximus opera, &c.*
That they were not performed by any natural power sufficiently appears from hence, that they are called Wonders or Miracles. Nor can it ever be, that grievous distempers should be healed immediately, only by a word speaking or by a touch, by the power of nature. For if those works could have been accounted for by any natural efficacy, it would have been said so at first by those who either profess'd themselves enemies of Christ, when He was upon earth, or of His Gospel. *Grot. de veritat. lib. xi. §. 5.*

(*l*) *Discourse iv. p. 10.*

used proper medicines, and had by him a more sanative balsam, which he subtilly slipt in the room of the clay with which he anointed the eyes of the blind man (m).

This is the solution which Mr *W.* gives of this case of curing the man that was born blind; and I believe he is the first author who ever thought that it was possible by any natural means to give sight to a person in that condition. There are indeed various interpretations given of this action of our Blessed Saviour in anointing the eyes of the blind man with the clay, who commonly performed His miraculous actions by immediate word and command. But I believe there is no author antient or modern besides Mr *W.* who ever imagin'd that there was any medicinal virtue in the clay, or in any thing else that could be mixed with it, which might administer to this cure. Neither do I think there ever was any one Physician or Naturalist, who hath judg'd it possible by any art or human means to open the eyes of one that is born blind. But let us see what judgment is given of this action of our Blessed Saviour by interpreters. Now some think that our Saviour used this method, that the force and power of the miracle might more clearly appear by the disagreement and disparity of those means which He used for the effecting it. And this notion seems to have some countenance from Scripture, in which there are several miraculous effects related, which were brought about by such causes as had no manner of similitude to or correspondence with them. Many instances might be given of this, but for brevity sake I will mention only one which is incontestable, and that we meet with

(m) Discourse iv. p. 14.

in 2 Kings vi. 5, to 8. As one was felling a beam, the ax-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, (viz. to the prophet Elisha) Alas! master, for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it. Now all men must grant, that the making iron to swim in water, by throwing a piece of wood into it, is wholly miraculous, and an effect very unsuitable and disproportionate to the cause by which it was accomplish'd. And *Grotius* thinks that the true reason why God made use of such means as had no virtue in themselves towards the producing of those effects, was to shew that He was the *Lord of nature*, and that all the powers thereof were subject to Him (n). Other interpreters think that our Blessed Saviour used this method to shew that He himself was the Creator of mankind, by using the same materials towards repairing any defect in mankind, which was the original substance of which man was composed. And this is the judgment of almost all the *Greek commentators* (o). But to pass by other opinions of this matter, that which seems to me to be the most rational of all the rest is this: The *Jews* were of opinion, that to anoint the eyes of any one with spittle was medicinal, and was unlawful to be done on the Sabbath day, as Dr *Lightfoot* observes (p); and it was upon the Sabbath day that this blind man received his sight, as we read in ver. 14. Upon which Dr *Lightfoot* thinks, that our Blessed Saviour used this method to try whether the blind man was tinctured with this super-

(n) Vid. *Grot.* in 2 Reg. ii. 20. (o) Vid. *Maldonat.* in loc. (p) *Lightfoot apud Poli Synops. Critic.* in loc.

stition, tho' I conceive that it was more probably done by our Blessed Saviour on account of the Pharisees themselves, in order to free them from their mistakes, and to shew them how little regard He had to their superstitious notions of the Sabbath-day. For we find in ver. 16. that some of the Pharisees said on the account of this cure, that *this man is not of God, because he keepeth not the Sabbath-day.* For the same reason many other cures which our Blessed Saviour wrought were done upon the Sabbath; which seem'd to be done at that time on purpose for the sake of those reasonings which He used with the Scribes and Pharisees on that occasion. (See *Luke* xiii. 11, to 18. *John* v. 1, to 17.) But let this matter be as it will, no interpreter ever imagin'd that the blind man recovered his sight by virtue of the clay, or any thing else that might be substituted in the place of it, as Mr *W.* thinks, but wholly by the divine and miraculous power of our Blessed Lord. And tho' Mr *W.* hath used several arguments mixed with much buffoonery, and many blasphemous reflections upon our Blessed Saviour's Person to prove the contrary; yet in his great heat and zeal for this matter he hath made one concession, that hath quite ruin'd his cause and put an end to the whole controversy; and as unskilful Generals have often done, he hath pursued his enemy so far and with so much precipitation, that he hath thereby made his own retreat absolutely impossible. For saith he, upon occasion of this cure, I grant that if *Jesus* had used no medicines, if only with a word of his mouth he had cured the man, and he had instantaneously recovered as the word was spoken, here would have been a great and real Miracle, let the blindness or imperfection of the man's sight be of what kind or degree

degree soever (q). And now is it not a great pity that an author, who could make such an acknowledgment as this, should be so bewitched and infatuated, as to plunge himself into the guilt of so much horrid and unparalleled profaneness and blasphemy, which he hath used in this argument. For does not Mr W. know, that the Gospel informs us of our Blessed Saviour's restoring blind men to their sight by the word of his mouth without the use of any medicines. Thus St Matthew tells us, that our Saviour cured two blind men only by touching their eyes, *ch. ix. 27, &c.* and afterwards two others in the same manner, that sat near *Jericho* begging. *ch. xx. 30, &c.* here was nothing applied to their eyes, as in the case of the blind man in *Job. ix.* but all that is said is, that our Saviour touched their eyes, and they received their sight. And it was very usual with our Blessed Saviour to touch those with His hand, whom He cured of other diseases as well as blindness, of which so many instances occur in the Gospel that it is needless to give any; and why our Blessed Saviour frequently chose to cure the blind and diseased persons by touching them with His hand rather than by barely speaking the word to them (which He likewise very often did) the antient writers of the Church have given several reasons (r). And not to mention the case of blind *Bartimeus*, who by the account St Mark gives of him was restored to his sight by our Saviour's immediate word and command, *ch. x. 46, &c.* because he is supposed by the Harmonists to be one of those two blind men last mentioned, *Matt. xx. 30, &c.* whose eyes St Matthew says our Saviour touch'd; I will give Mr W. a plain instance

(q) Woolston's fourth Discourse, p. 9.

(r) Vid. Maldonat. in Matth. viii. 3.

of a blind man, whom the Gospel tells us our Saviour restored to his sight without any mention even of His touching his eyes, and much less using any natural means towards the healing of them; and that is in *Matth. xii. 22.* *Then was brought unto Him one possess'd with a Devil, blind and dumb: and He healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.* Here is an undeniable instance of a blind man restored to his sight, without the use of any medicines, nay even without so much as our Saviour's touching him with His hand, and therefore according to Mr *W.*'s concession a clear proof of his working real Miracles. And since inveterate palsies and other diseases are as difficult to be cured by a bare word, as that of blindness, there is the same reason why the benefit of this concession should be likewise extended to them. And there are so many instances of this kind in the Gospel, that it is needless to trouble the Reader with any of them.

And thus Mr *W.* after all his boasts of wit and argument on this subject hath given up the cause entirely into our hands, and with that I shall put an end to the controversy with him, having sufficiently proved in the foregoing discourse, that our Blessed Saviour's Miracles were real facts, and were not owing to the power of imagination, or to any natural causes, but wholly to His Divine Authority. And having thus considered the objections of such who deny the truth and reality of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, I now proceed to answer the objections of those, who allowing the Miracles of Christ to be real facts do yet either deny them to be what we call Miracles, or else lay down some Hypothesis or other to solve the argument arising from the power and authority of them.

I shall

I shall first consider the objections of those who acknowledge that our Blessed Saviour's Miracles were facts really done, but yet deny them to be what we commonly call by the name of Miracles. And this is the argument on which the most learned of our modern infidels do much insist, and that which they urge upon this head is this, *viz.* that there are no such things as Miracles properly speaking, but that those things which we call by that name are as much the effects of certain causes and powers in nature, as others are which are more familiar and common.

Thus *Spinoza* lays it down for a maxim in his Philosophy, that Miracles and Ignorance are equivalent terms (s). What he means by it is this, that those things we account miraculous are as really effected by natural causes, as any of the most common appearances of nature are, tho' we are ignorant of that which is the cause

(s) *Spinoza* plainly places miraculous facts to the account of mens ignorance of the works of nature in these words, *Miracula & ignorantiam pro æquipollentibus sumpti*. And he gives this reason for making miracles and ignorance to be equivalent terms, *quia ii qui Dei existentiam & religionem miraculis adstruere co-nantur rem obscuram per aliam magis obscuram & quam maxime ignorant (*viz.* the powers of nature) ostendere volunt, atque ita novum argumentandi genus adferunt, redigendo scilicet non ad impossibile ut aiunt, sed ad ignorantiam*. That is, we pretend to prove the truth of certain propositions, of which we can judge by our reason, by certain wonderful facts of whose causes we are not able to judge at all, and therefore must be less known than the propositions which they are intended to prove. From thence he infers that Miracles, the causes of which are unknown to us, can never be a proof of any thing, unless it were possible or allowable to enlighten an obscure proposition by another that was equally or more obscure than itself. *Gurdon's Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, p. 334, 335. *Nil contra naturam contingere, sed ipsam æternum fixum & immutabilem ordinem servare. Spinozæ Tractat. Theologico Politic. cap. 6. Where this opinion and doctrine concerning Miracles may be seen at large.*

of them. And this notion of theirs concerning Miracles they ground upon this, that God is a necessary Agent, and consequently that all the motions of matter, and all the various *Phænomena* of nature, as well those which are more rare and extraordinary, as those which are ordinary and common, are necessary too. But this doctrine is built upon a great mistake in Philosophy; for God is not a necessary but a free Agent, as many great and learned men have clearly demonstrated (1). And indeed this is a certain consequence of His Self-existence, and Intelligence, and that supreme Dominion which He hath over all things. For an Intelligent Being that exists of Himself, and upon whom all things depend, must be absolutely free in all His actions; since 'tis plain that nothing can resist His will, nor impose any necessity upon Him of acting otherwise than He pleases. But we need not go to *Metaphysics* for the proof of this matter; for the works of nature themselves are a sufficient evidence thereof; since it manifestly appears that they are so far from being the effects of a necessary cause, that they carry in them the plainest marks and characters of liberty and freedom. For if the earth had been owing to necessity, as *Spinoza* and other Atheists contend, it could not have been of its present form and figure, nor indeed of any figure at all, but must have been infinite as its cause. For absolute necessity cannot admit of any restriction and limitation upon its effects, as the productions of free agents do by the will and counsel of the artificer, but must be every where the same uniformly and alike; and

(1) Vid. Dr Bentley's 6, 7, and 8th Sermons at Boyle's Lectures. Dr S. Clarke's Serm. at the same, part i. prop. 9. Mr Gurdon's Sermons at the same, Discourse 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

consequently

consequently the finite condition of the earth, and it's being of a particular magnitude and form, is a clear demonstration, that it was not owing to necessity. Besides, the infinite variety that is in the world and in all the works of nature, is a manifest indication of this truth; and it is very plain, that any of the most observable *Phænomena* of nature might have been quite different from what they are at present. No one can say but that the earth might have been of another magnitude and form than what it now is. The sun might have been fixed at a greater or less distance from the earth, and the obliquity of the ecliptic to the equator might have been otherwise than it is, which would have caus'd a great alteration in the heat of all climates, and made the seasons of the year quite different from what they are at present. There might have been more or fewer stars or planets, a greater or less number of plants and animals. And any one of the several species of them might have been of a different size, figure, and construction from that which it now is. All which is surely a most convincing proof, that the works of nature are the product of a free and arbitrary cause, and were not owing to necessity. 'Tis true, the works of nature are for the most part very regular and constant. The earth brings forth its fruits, and the seasons of the year advance upon us in their due time and order; and as the Psalmist observes civ. 19. *God hath appointed the moon for certain seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down;* and excepting that inconstancy that is in the wind and the elements, (without which they would not be of so great use and service to mankind, since navigation and the wholesomeness of the air depend upon the one, and the fruitfulness of the earth upon the other)

and

and excepting sometimes an excess or defect in the seasons themselves ; all which things with many others are the great instruments of Providence, by which God rewards or punishes the nations of the world according to their deserts : I say excepting this, there is generally speaking a great regularity and order observ'd in all the works of nature. But this regularity is not in the least owing to any necessity in the things themselves, but to the sole will and pleasure of God, who hath imposed these laws of motion upon them, and presides over and governs all things in the world by settled rules and methods which are called the laws of nature. Since then this order and regularity which is establish'd in the world, is entirely owing to and dependent upon God's will, it is very evident that He can change and alter it at His pleasure. And whenever He gives those who are commissioned by Him authority to make such remarkable alterations in the works of nature, as in the common judgment of mankind cannot be ascribed to any natural cause, these are what we call by the name of Miracles.

Thus for instance ; it is a law of nature that the sun should (speaking according to the vulgar Philosophy) continue to move regularly in its orbit, as it constantly does ; but now if we should observe that at the command of any person it should immediately stand still for some time, and much more for a whole day, as the Scripture assures us it did in the time of *Joshua*, and at his word, *chap. x. 12, 13.* we should not doubt to call this a real Miracle. And the same judgment may be pass'd upon the wonderful works of our Blessed Saviour recorded in the Gospel, such as giving sight to the blind, feet to the

the lame, &c. and particularly the raising of dead bodies to life again.

And what *Spinoza* lays down in the passage above cited in the margin (p. 61.) viz. That we pretend to prove the truth of certain propositions of which we can judge by our reason, by certain wonderful facts of whose causes we are not able to judge at all, is entirely false ; for when we plainly observe such great and uncommon effects, which are contrary to the general order and course of nature, to be brought about by the immediate word and command of those who have a divine commission, we may clearly judge that they are the causes of them. For if any one should object, that we cannot comprehend the manner how such miraculous effects are accomplished by persons divinely inspired ; this is no more an argument that they are not the causes of them, than it is against any causes that are purely natural ; since tho' in many cases in natural Philosophy we can certainly argue from effects to their proper causes, yet it is agreed on all hands, that we are not able to comprehend the manner how such effects are produced by them. But I am sensible that *Spinoza* and his followers do endeavour to account for the Scripture Miracles another way ; they do not suppose that they are really brought about by persons divinely inspired, but earnestly contend that they are natural, *i. e.* as much the effects of natural causes, tho' to us secret and unknown, as the most ordinary and common appearances of life are : and so according to the doctrine of these men, supposing the Scripture History to be true (tho' as will be seen presently they have several evasions to bring themselves off in such cases as are difficult and cannot in any wise be reconciled with their hypothesis) the sun would have stood

still upon *Gibeon* at the very hour when *Joshua* gave the word, tho' he had not ordered it to do so ; and in like manner in our Blessed Saviour's time the blind would have received their sight, the lame would have walked, and the dead would have been raised up, exactly at the time when these things happen'd, tho' He had not given any command to that purpose ; but let them believe this who can.

I hope those, who can think this possible, will never reproach us Christians any more with being too easy and credulous in matters of Faith : and whatever these pretended masters of Philosophy may assert, I do not in the least question, but that if any persons among us had liv'd in the times of *Joshua* or of Jesus Christ, and had seen these things done before their eyes, they would have acknowledg'd them to have been great and real Miracles.

And whatever confidence *Spinoza* might have in the truth of his Philosophy, yet as the learned Mr *Gurdon* observes, he was well aware that he might be press'd with the account of some facts in the Gospel (such as the resurrection of dead bodies, and particularly our Blessed Saviour's raising Himself to life again) which seem'd to exceed all the powers of nature, and consequently that there might be such things as we call Miracles : and therefore he endeavours to bring himself off by this reserve, *viz.* that “ if some facts be related in the Gospel, which do truly exceed all the powers of nature, such facts were not real, but in appearance only (u) ; ” or as he expresses himself in another place, that they were additions made to the Holy Scriptures by wicked

(u) *Gurdon's Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, p. 335, 336.

men (w) : so that there seems to be nothing further necessary to prove the reality of Miracles against *Spinoza* and his followers, but only to shew that the miraculous facts recorded in the **Gospel** were actually done as they are said to be, of which more hereafter. But yet I cannot dismiss this subject without taking notice of two things, which the aforesaid excellent Author hath observed (x), which *Spinoza* can never give any rational account of upon the principles of his philosophy.

1st. If those things which we call Miracles were really the effects of natural causes, how came it to pass that they were not more frequent and common ; for this is the state and condition of all things that are natural ; the sun continues to observe his course and to give light and heat to the inhabitants of the earth ; all creatures in the world propagate their kind, and the earth is regular and constant in bringing forth the fruits of it, and nature is for the most part very uniform and methodical in its effects and operations ; nay, and even those irregularities of nature, which are reckon'd portentous, are seldom owing to any thing else than to some secret deficiency of nature, when it is not able to perform its usual operations, and are things very common to all times. And many of those things which the vulgar call prodigies (because they are ignorant of the nature of them and have had lit-

(w) *Quare hic absolute concludimus omnia quæ in Scripturâ vere narrantur contigisse, ea secundum leges naturæ ut omnia necessario contigisse, & si quid reperiatur, quod apodictice demonstrari potest legibus naturæ repugnare, aut ex iis consequi non potuisse, plane credendum id a sacrilegiis hominibus sacrâ literis adjectum fuisse. Quicquid enim contra naturam est, id contra rationem est, & quod contra rationem, id absurdum est ac proinde etiam refutandum.* *Spinozæ Tract. Theol. Polit. cap. 6. p. 77. 4to. vid. etiam p. 78.*

(x) *Gurdon, p. 342, &c.*

tle or no experience of such things) do yet frequently happen in all ages of the world, as is very evident to those who are acquainted with Philosophy and natural History (y); and whenever they do happen, they proceed from their own proper causes in nature, without any particular interposition of God, or immediate command of those who are commission'd by Him, as Miracles do; whereas Miracles are very rare and uncommon things, that are done but very seldom, and only on great and extraordinary occasions, and that by virtue of an immediate Divine interposition.

Thus the making the sun to stand still for a whole day in *Joshua*'s time was a great and uncommon effect, which as far as appears from history did never happen but only that one time from the Creation to this day; and as St *John* observes in the case of the man who was born blind, whom our Blessed Saviour restor'd to his sight, the like was not heard of since the world began, *John* ix. 32. and the raising of dead bodies to life again, which our Blessed Saviour did beyond all denial, was a thing wholly new to the world, excepting two or three instances of that kind which were done by the Prophets under the Old Testament, *1 Kings xvii. 17, &c. 2 Kings iv. 32. chap. xiii. 21.* Now if these great and wonderful operations were owing to natural causes, as *Spinoza* and his followers contend, it is very unac-

(y) *What Mr Hobbs observes upon this occasion is very just and pertinent, viz. that from the different knowledge and experience of men it is, that ignorant and superstitious men make great wonders of those works, which other men knowing to proceed from nature (which is not the immediate, but the ordinary work of God) admire not at all. Leviath. cap. 37. p. 234. And what Mr Hobbs observes in that place of eclipses holds true of many other things. Vid. Prideaux's Connect. Vol. i. 80. sub anno ante Christum 598.*

countable that they should have happen'd so very rarely and so very seldom, and should not have been more regular and constant, as natural effects are used to be ; and I appeal to any man of tolerable sense and judgment, whether those effects can with any reason be ascrib'd to a natural cause, which fails many millions of times where it becomes once successful. But,

2dly. Supposing these miraculous operations were really owing to natural causes, as these philosophers imagine, yet here arises another great difficulty, of which they can never give any tolerable solution ; and that is, how came our Blessed Saviour to be acquainted with this matter. For if you destroy the truth and reality of His Miracles, and thereby deny him to be a Divine Person, as the *Spinozists* do, you must then consider Him as an ordinary and common Jew of mean parentage and education ; and then the question is, how could He possibly know that these secret and unknown powers of nature would exert themselves so exactly and successfully at that time, in producing those wonderful effects which He should require of them ; that when He ordered the blind man to receive his sight, the lame to walk, and the dead to be raised up, these things should immediately be done according to His command : there had not been one instance of the former kind from the beginning of the world to this day, and but very few instances of the latter : and therefore how can it be conceiv'd that our Blessed Saviour would have expos'd His character and reputation, and the truth of His authority and commission, to such a fatal hazard and uncertainty. And indeed if we take the matter in this light, it appears to be so unreasonable and desperate an undertaking,

that

that no man of common sense, and much less a person of such excellent and divine wisdom as Christ was, would ever have presumed to venture upon it.

And therefore since our Blessed Saviour did plainly undertake to perform the most uncommon and surprizing works, and since nothing which He requir'd to be done did ever once fail in such remarkable and innumerable instances in which He was pleased to exert Himself, it is very evident that He had nature entirely at His command, and thereby had a power of working real Miracles ; and consequently that He was a Teacher sent from God.

And thus I have shewn the possibility of working Miracles in opposition to the reasoning of our modern Atheists. I proceed now to consider the objections of those, who allowing our Blessed Saviour's works to be real Miracles do yet deny the consequence in Scripture, *viz.* that he was a Teacher sent from God. The persons who have given into this way of reasoning were the Jews of old and the Philosophers among the Gentiles.

First, Let us consider the argument of the Jews. Now the Jews of old were so very sensible, that Jesus Christ wrought those Miracles which in the Gospel are ascribed to Him, that they made not the least scruple of acknowledging this truth : thus we find in the Gospel, when upon occasion of raising *Lazarus* from the dead the Pharisees had been told *what things Jesus had done*, it is said that *then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council, and said what do we? for this man doth many Miracles, if we let him Him thus alone, all men will believe on him*, John xi. 47, 48. And the same acknowledgment of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles is made by the Jews in their *Talmud*

Talmud (z), and by the most learned of their writers ever since (a) ; nay, even the most blasphemous Jewish treatise that hath been publish'd has not, as Bishop *Smalbroke* observes (b), dared to deny that our Blessed Saviour by His mere word wrought Miracles, and even raised the dead ; to which we may add the testimony of *Mahomet* himself, who owns the same in his *Alcoran*. All which makes it the more surprizing that an Author who hath lately appeared among us, and who was born and educated in a Christian country, should in so prophane and blasphemous a manner have presum'd to call them into question. But tho' the Jews did own that our Blessed Saviour wrought real Miracles, yet they endeavour'd to evade the force of them by this impious suggestion, *viz.* that they were wrought by magick art, and by the power of the Devil ; but the weakness as well as the malice of this suggestion was very easily confuted these two ways.

1st. By the excellency and goodness of that doctrine which our Blessed Saviour taught ; it being as was before observ'd absolutely inconsistent with the nature of the Devil and the interests of his kingdom, to work any Signs or Miracles in testimony of such doctrine ; for this would be to divide his kingdom against it self and bring it to desolation, as our Blessed Saviour excellently argued with the Jews upon that occasion, *Matth. xii. 25.* And then,

2^{dly}. Those who work Miracles by the power of the Devil are always remarkable for their wickedness and immorality, which is the only

(z) *Vid. Grot. de Veritat. Lib. ii. §. 5.*

(a) *Vid. Smalbroke's Vindicat. part i. p. 37.*

(b) *Smalbroke, ibid.*

thing that entitles them to his help and assistance ; and therefore that divine life and heavenly conversation, which our Blessed Saviour led in the world, did sufficiently expose the weakness and malice of this pretence, and demonstrate that the Miracles which He wrought were done by the finger of God. And thus much for the objection of the Jews against the Miracles of our Saviour.

I proceed now to consider what hath been urged against them by the learned Philosophers among the Gentiles. Now that which they chiefly argued against the authority of Christ's Miracles was this : they said, that the working those Miracles was no proof and evidence at all of His having a Divine commission, since many persons in several ages of the world had likewise work'd great Miracles, who yet never had any such commission ; and to this purpose, as Bishop *Leng* expresses it (c), they raked together all the old stories they could meet withal of strange things done by some antient Philosophers, Magicians and impostors, to which they added some new ones of their own ; and these they set up in opposition to the Miracles of Christ and His Apostles, in order to invalidate the authority of them.

Now many of the Miracles ascrib'd to these persons are not only in themselves very trifling and ridiculous, as will be seen hereafter when they shall be taken into examination ; but there is this just exception to be made to the credibility of them, that the Gentiles had recourse to them merely as a shift and refuge, to screen themselves from the force and authority of Christ's Miracles ; and therefore they were oblig'd to exert all their wit and parts to put the best colours

(c) *Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, p. 462. Vid. p. 464, 465.
upon

upon them that they were able (d) ; but however I will proceed to the consideration of them.

Now not thinking it worth my while to mention the case of *Pythagoras*, since as *Dean Sherlock* observes (e), I suppose no man will think that his concealing himself for seven years, and then pretending that he had been in the other world and return'd again to teach men philosophy, is to be compar'd to the certain account we have both of the death and resurrection of our Saviour, who rose again with an immortal body, not to live in this world and to die again, but to ascend in His glorified body up to Heaven, there to live for ever, and never to die more ; which is so peculiar to our Saviour, that no man yet ever had the impudence to pretend to it : I say not to mention this, the chief persons whose Miracles have been thus set up in opposition to those of our Saviour Christ are these three,

(d) *It is a thing highly probable, if not unquestionable, that Apollonius Tyanaeus shortly after the publication of the Gospel to the world was a person made choice of by the policy and assisted by the powers of the kingdom of darkness for the doing of some things extraordinary, merely out of design to derogate from the Miracles of our Saviour Christ, and to enable Paganism the better to bear up against the assaults of Christianity ; for among the many Writers of this Philosopher's life some, and particularly Philostratus, seem to have had no other aim in this their whole undertaking, than only to dress up Apollonius in such a garb and manner, as might make him best seem to be a fit corriwal with our Saviour Christ both in respect of Sanctity and Miracles ; Eunapius therefore telling us that he mistitled his book, and that instead of the life of Apollonius he should have call'd it the coming down and converse of God with men ; forasmuch as this Apollonius (saith he) was not a bare Philosopher or man, but a certain middle thing betwixt the Gods and men : and that this was the use commonly made by the Pagans of this history of Apollonius, namely, to set him up in way of opposition and rivalry to our Saviour Christ, appears sundry ways. Cudworth's Intellect. System. p. 265, 266.*

(e) *Sherlock on the immortality of the soul, &c. p. 233.*

viz. *Aristeas Proconnesius*, *Vespasian* the Emperor, and *Apollonius Tyanaeus*, to which Mr *Woolston* who urges the Miracles which these persons are said to have wrought, has added to the same purpose (f) a fourth person, viz. the famous Mr *Greatrak*, who appear'd in this kingdom soon after the restoration of king *Charles II*.

Of these in their order. And,

First, as to the Miracles which are said to have been wrought by *Aristeas*. This person was a Poet, and was born at *Proconnesus* (g), an island in the *Propontis*, and lived in the time of the Emperor *Cyrus*. The Miracles which he is said to have done were objected to the Christians by *Celsus* the famous *Epicurean*, against whom St *Origen* wrote; and the account which *Celsus* gives of him is taken from *Herodotus*, and is this, viz. that *Herodotus* tells us he heard such a story at *Proconnesus*, that *Aristeas* died there, but that his body could not be found dead or alive for seven years; but that afterwards he appear'd and made verses, and then disappear'd again; and above 200 years after was seen at *Metapontum*, where he order'd them to erect an altar to *Apollo*, and a statue to himself close by it, telling them he had once been the crow which came with *Apollo* into *Italy*; and after he said this, he vanished again.

To this story out of *Herodotus* *Celsus* adds another story of *Abaris* riding in the air upon an arrow of *Apollo* over the sea and land (as *Porphyry* also relates it) and of *Hermotimus Clazomenius*, whose soul often left the body and wander'd up and down without it (h). This is the account of the Miracles of *Aristeas* which were set up in opposition to those of our Saviour Christ, and

(f) *Woolston's first discourse on our Saviour's Miracles*, p. 60.

(g) *Baudrand. Lexicon Geograph. in voce Proconnesus*.

(h) *Vid. Bishop Leng's Sermons*, p. 462, 463.

there

there will be no need of spending much time in the examination of them. For,

1st. *Herodotus*, upon whose testimony this story depends, only says, that when he was at *Proconnesus* he heard such things said of him ; so that the story it self relies wholly upon common fame. And is this to be compared to the testimony of the Apostles concerning the Miracles of Jesus Christ, which they themselves saw with their own eyes ?

2dly. It is very plain that what is related of this person is entirely fabulous, because one part of his history consists in this, that he could die at any time he pleas'd, and whenever he had a mind to it could resume his soul after his decease ; than which nothing can be more trifling and ridiculous (i). And,

3dly and lastly. I appeal to any man of common sense and understanding, whether the story of *Aristeas*, as above-mentioned by *Celsus*, be not in it self as absurd and fantastical as can be imagin'd. And indeed had any thing like this been related of Jesus Christ in the Gospel ; had the doctrine of His resurrection been made to consist in this, that after His death His body could not be found dead or alive for seven years, and then He appeared to His Disciples in *Judea*, and 300 years after in other places, and then vanished away ; had it been said of any of His Apostles and Disciples that they were turn'd into crows, and rode upon arrows over the sea and the like ; I say, had the Miracles of Christ in the Gospel been of this nature, our modern Infidels needed not to have taken the pains they have done to ridicule and reflect upon them ; for

(i) *Quem, scilicet Aristeam fabulantur defunctum, quoties vellet, animam resumpsisse.* *Baudrand ibid. vid.* *Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. lib. i. cap. 4.*

there would have been nothing more necessary but to bring them to the light, in order to expose the folly and absurdity of them. And so much for the pretended Miracles of *Aristeas*.

I come now to consider the case of the Emperor *Vespasian*, who is likewise affirm'd to have work'd Miracles, *viz.* to restore a blind man to his sight, and to cure a lame man at *Alexandria* in *Egypt* (k). Now in answer to this, in the first place, if we should suppose that *Vespasian* really wrought these Miracles, as it hath been reported of him, yet this will not bring any prejudice to the reality of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, nor to the evidence of His Divine Authority as arising from them; for by the third principle which I laid down in the beginning of this discourse (p. 13, 14.) it does not appear to be essential to the nature of a Miracle, that it be wrought in testimony of a Divine Commission, but it is possible there may be other occasions of its being done, and God may have different ends and designs of His Providence to be serv'd by it: and as I then observ'd, whenever God is pleased to give any man a power of working Miracles, who hath not a particular commission to establish any new doctrines, He knows in whose hands He trusts this power, and He can restrain and govern it at His pleasure. And therefore the working of Miracles, as an instance of an extraordinary interposition of God's Providence, can in no wise destroy the credit and authority of those which are perform'd in evidence and testimony of a Divine Commission. And then,

Secondly, If we should suppose that *Vespasian* wrought those Miracles as is pretended, they might have been design'd by God, to give some testi-

(k) Tacitus, Hist. lib. iv. Suetonius in Vesp. cap. 7.

mony of superior dignity and character to that person, who in conjunction with *Titus* his Son was appointed by God to be the great instrument of executing his vengeance upon the Jewish nation, as was before observ'd (1). And,

Thirdly and lastly, Vespasian never pretended to any Divine Commission, nor to establish any new doctrines in virtue of those Miracles ; nor did he ever make any other use of them than to recommend himself by that means to the favour of the people ; and therefore I cannot see if we should suppose them to be real, how they can in the least degree prejudice the cause of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, which were wrought in testimony of His being the true Messiah, and a Teacher sent from God.

But in the 2d place, there are very good reasons to conclude, that these Miracles were not really wrought by *Vespasian* as they are said to be. In order to the manifesting of which it will be necessary in a few words to open the state of the *Roman* affairs at that time, when these Miracles were said to be done.

Now upon the death of *Nero* the *Roman* Emperor, who was the last of the family of the *Cæsars* (tho' other Emperors did afterwards call themselves by that name) there began that horrid and mischievous custom in the Empire (which continued therein for a long time to the great danger and confusion thereof) *viz.* the setting up of Emperors by the Soldiers, and again de-throning and murdering them at their pleasure.

And thus *Nero* being dead, *Galba* the *Roman* commander in *Spain* was made Emperor by the Army, and in about seven months after was murder'd by them : to him succeeded *Otho*, who in

(1) Vid. p. 14.

a little above three months being entirely defeated by the party of *Vitellius* his Rival in the Empire, in despair of any future success, and that he might by that means spare the blood of his countrymen, kill'd himself ; and this establish'd *Vitellius* in the Government, who was acknowledged Emperor both by the Army and the Senate ; but he in a very little time by reason of his abominable luxury and horrid cruelties became so odious and obnoxious to his subjects, that several of his prime commanders in their different provinces revolted from him ; and as it is usual upon such occasions to make choice of some proper person to be the head of the dissension, they accordingly soon began to cast their eyes upon *Vespasian*, the famous commander in the wars against the Jews, who was accordingly proclaimed Emperor by them, and soon after by his own Army in *Judæa* ; but it seems he could not be prevail'd upon to accept the honour till he was compell'd to it (an artifice frequently made use of by many usurpers since his days) and the Soldiers had with drawn swords threaten'd to kill him, if he did not take the Empire upon him.

And thus *Vespasian* consenting to be Emperor, a Council was immediately call'd, in which it was concluded that *Titus* his son should continue the war in *Judæa*, and other commanders being assign'd to other posts, that he himself should go to *Alexandria* (the place where he is said to have work'd the Miracles) for the better direction and management of his affairs. And here, if any credit is due to *Philostratus* (m), *Vespasian* met with *Apollonius Tyanaeus* that famous Juggler and Magician, of whom more shall be said presently ; nay, that he went thither on purpose to have

(m) Vid. *Tillemont's Life of Apollonius*, p. 18, 19.

his advice upon the dubious state of his affairs at that time. And when he came to that city, there were, as the same Author asserts, two very different advices and councils given him, the one was to restore the Commonwealth to its former dignity and lustre, which was the advice of *Dion* and *Euphrates*, two eminent Philosophers ; the other was to assume the Empire to himself, which was the counsel of *Apollonius* ; which being so, it is very natural to suppose that *Apollonius* might propose to *Vespasian* the working of some strange signs and wonders, as the most likely means of gaining the favour of the people, and of being look'd on by them as a person highly belov'd and favour'd by the Gods ; especially since these were things with which he himself was so well acquainted, and since as *Suetonius* observes in the life of *Vespasian* (n), he stood in need of some authority and dignity to recommend him, as being one who was but newly and unexpectedly advanced to the Empire. All which makes it at least very suspicious, that political art and contrivance had a considerable share and influence in these Miracles, especially since *Vespasian* was so far from believing that he should be able to perform those cures, that, as *Tacitus* relates *, he at first laughed at and despised the proposed method of curing : afterwards indeed by the two persons earnest entreaties and the flattery of his friends, he was induced to hope that he might succeed, tho' at the same time he fear'd lest he should suffer in his character as a vain man for making such an experiment ; and therefore would not make it, till he was prevail'd upon to do so by the importu-

(n) Auctoritas & quasi Majestas quædam ut scilicet inopinato & adhuc novo principi deerat. *Suet. in Vesp. cap. 7.*

* *Vespasianus primo irridere, aspernari: &c. Tac. Hist. lib. 4. prope finem.*

nate desire of his friends ; which says a learned Annotator upon *Suetonius* (o) were the Physicians, who might very probably join with *Apollonius* both in his flattery of *Vespasian* and in his imposture. Neither is the judgment which these Physicians gave upon this occasion less remarkable, *viz.* if all obstructions in the man's eyes could be remov'd, he might recover his sight, and if a sufficient remedy could be found out for restoring the soundness to the part affected, the lame man might be made whole ; which I really think is in plain words saying little more than this, that if it were possible for those persons to be cured, they might be cured. Besides, those who have a power from God to work Miracles need not surely to consult Physicians concerning the possibility of those cures, which they must certainly know they have power as well as authority to accomplish. And as *Apollonius* and others of *Vespasian*'s flatterers and friends might very easily join in the contrivance of those Miracles, the better to support the dignity and reputation of his new acquired character ; so it is very natural to think that the Jews of *Alexandria* (at which place there were great numbers of them) would soon be induced to give credit to the report of them, not only because their own historian *Josephus* had complimented *Vespasian* with the character of the *Messias* (tho', as a learned Prelate observes (p), he did not abide by that

(o) *Quum vix fides esset rem ullo modo successuram, ideoque ne experiri quidem auderet: extremò hortantibus amicis] Maxime Medicis, qui differebant non excusam esse vim luminis illi orbato luminibus, & reddituram aciem, si pellerentur obstantia; alteri vero depravatos artus integrari posse, si salubris vis adhiberetur. Beroald. not. in Suet. ibid.*

(p) *And for Josephus, whatever his real sentiments were at the time of writing his wars of the Jews wherein he made the above-mentioned application to Vespasian, when he came to write*

that opinion) but also because the belief and acknowledgment of those Miracles might to the generality of the people, who are weak and ignorant, be a plausible pretence to disown and deny the authority and character of Jesus Christ the true Messias. But that which chiefly confirms me in the distrust and suspicion of these Miracles, is what *Suetonius* tells us in the life of *Vespasian*, viz. that he had been a great while concern'd with prodigies and things portentous; and that after the death of *Nero* and *Galba*, when *Otho* and *Vitellius* were contending for the Scepter (which was a good while before these pretended Miracles were wrought) he had entertain'd hopes of obtaining the Empire, on account of many things of that kind which had happen'd; several of which *Suetonius* mentions in his life (cap. 5.) But that I may not tire the Reader's patience, I will take notice only of two or three which are very remarkable, and which fully manifest the superstition of this person, as well as a great deal of art and contrivance in the management of them.

Now one of these fortuitous events upon which he built great hopes of success was this, when he was one day at dinner, a strange dog brought out of the highway the hand of a man, and cast it under the table. At another time being at supper, an ox having broke the plough-yoke rush'd into the room, and the servants being fled away, did, as if he was suddenly wearied and tired, fall down at his feet, and submitted his neck to him. And to mention no more, that a cypress-tree being without the force of any storm torn up by

write his antiquities under Domitian, he seems firmly attack'd to the first belief of his nation, and declared it as openly as he dared in his circumstances. Bishop Chandler's Vindication, p. 357.

the roots, did the next day raise it self up again with greater strength and verdure. Nay so far was this person favoured with these ominous discoveries, that when he consulted the oracle at mount *Carmel*, it seems the sentence was, that whatsoever he should think of, or purpose in his mind, should certainly come to pass. Now whether *Vespasian* was enthusiastical in this particular, or whether there was any craft used with the attendants on this Oracle (as it is probable there was with many others, and it is undeniable there frequently was with the books of the Sybils at *Rome*, which the *Romans* esteemed to be the most sacred of their Oracles, and which *Cicero* himself desired might be used in order to obtain an answer against making *Caesar* King (q); I say however this be) it shews thus much that *Vespasian* was of a proper genius and disposition for such a man as *Apollonius* to work upon, and that he would readily come into any scheme and contrivance either in point of prodigy or miracle, which might tend to advance his fortune, and add new lustre and reputation to his character and dignity. And thus much may be sufficient to be spoken concerning the pretended Miracles of *Vespasian*.

I proceed now to consider the third person, whose Miracles were by the Philosophers of old set up in opposition to those of our Saviour Christ, viz. *Apollonius* the Magician, who was born at *Tyana* a city in *Cappadocia*, and therefore called *Apollonius Tyaneus*. He flourish'd in the reign of the Emperor *Domitian*, which was in the latter end of the first century. It will not take up much time to shew the weakness of the arguments drawn from the pretended Miracles of this person. For first, if we should sup-

(q) Vid. *Prideaux's Connect.* 8^o. Vol. iv. p. 892, 893. sub ann. ante Christum 13.

pose that they were really acted as they are said to be, yet this cannot bring the least prejudice to the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, since by what was laid down in the beginning of this discourse, (p. 10.) it plainly appears that they were not wrought by the power and assistance of God; because they were designed to promote idolatry and the worship of false Gods, to which *Apollonius* was strongly addicted, and for the support of which these Miracles of his were recorded; which makes a wide difference between them and the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, which were wrought by a Divine Power, as is very evident not only from the Miracles themselves (many of which did certainly require a Divine Power to effect (r) them) but also from the excellency and goodness of that doctrine, for the support of which they were perform'd. But

2dly. There is no good evidence that these Miracles of *Apollonius* were really wrought as they are said to be. For first, the history of *Apollonius* is nothing more than a romance or fable. This *Eusebius* hath fully shewn in his treatise against *Hierocles*. And the learned Dr *Prideaux* observes the same in his connexion (s), and gives a very good argument for the proof of it. And this is further evident from the history of that magician it self, as it is given by *Philostratus*, which, as the great *Photius* observed many ages since, abounds with ridiculous stories and monstrous tales (t).

It would take up too much of the Reader's time to enlarge upon this matter, and therefore I shall mention only one instance which may justly

(r) Vid. p. 8.

(s) Vol. ii. 80. p. 113. sub ann. ante Christum 293. (t) The English Reader may fully perceive this in Mons. *Tillemont's* life of *Apollonius*, which is chiefly taken from *Philostratus*, and translated into English by R. Jenkin, with useful observations.

Serve as a specimen of the rest ; and that is, when *Domitian* had by a Decree banished all the Philosophers and Astrologers out of *Rome* and *Italy*, shortly after *Apollonius* was sent for to *Rome* by this Emperor, on pretence of his sacrificing a child, and foretelling *Nerva* to be Emperor ; and being brought before *Domitian*, *Philostratus* tells us that after some discourse with him he vanished out of his sight, and was found the same evening at *Puteoli*, which was three days journey from *Rome* (u). To which I will only add a remarkable instance, among others, of his art of Divination, taken notice of by the learned Dr *Henry More*, (w) which was this : A Halo being observ'd about the sun in *Greece*, which meteor being round like a crown, but much obscuring the light of the sun, *Apollonius*'s prediction was that one *Stephanus* (which signifies a crown) should kill the Emperor *Domitian*. And accordingly it is said that at the same minute in which *Domitian* was slain, *Apollonius* being at *Ephesus* suddenly cry'd out before great numbers, *Courage, brave Stephanus ! strike the tyrant home.* And that immediately after he said, *All is well, the tyrant is dead, he is just now slain* (x).

Now if you suppose these accounts to be true, they will clearly demonstrate that he was a Magician (y). And if they are false, then the consequence

(u) Vid. *Tillemont's life of Apollonius*, p. 23, to 27. *Echard's Eccl. Hist.* sub ann. Dom. 94.

(w) *Grand mystery of godliness*, lib. iv. ch. x. §. 4. See the place. (x) Vid. *Echard's Eccl. Hist.* sub. A. D. 96. *Tillemont's Life of Apollonius*, p. 28.

(y) *Eusebius* undertakes to evince from *Philostratus's own history* (tho' containing many falsehoods in it) *τὸν ἐν ἀμενίᾳ* &c. *that Apollonius was so far from deserving to be compared with our Saviour Christ, that he was not fit to be ranked among the moderately and indifferently honest men.* Wherefore as to his reputed

quence is plain that the history of *Apollonius* as it is given to us by *Philostratus* is nothing else but romance and fable. And yet if we should suppose that this was designed for a real history, it will appear to be but of very small authority; since it relies chiefly upon the single testimony of *Damis* the friend of *Apollonius*, who appears throughout the whole history and is acknowledged by *Philostratus* himself to be a very weak and ignorant person, and was therefore easily liable to be imposed upon by the artifice and cunning of such a juggler as *Apollonius* was. And besides, as the memoirs of *Damis* are long since

puted Miracles, if credit be to be given to those relations, and such things were really done by him, it must also for this reason also be concluded, that they were done no otherwise than by Magick and Necromancy; and that this *Apollonius* was but an Archimago or Grand Magician. Neither ought this to be suspected for a mere slander cast upon him by partially-affected Christians only, since during his life-time he was generally reputed even among the Pagans themselves for no other than a *γόνος*, or infamous inchanter, and accused of that very crime before Domitian the Emperor, as he was also represented such by one of the Pagan Writers of his Life, *Meeragene*, senior to *Philostratus*, as we learn from *Origen*, 'τετ μαστας φαίδη &c. as concerning the infamous and diabolical Magick, be that would know whether or no a Philosopher be temptable by it, or illaqueable into it, let him read the writings of *Meeragene* concerning the memorable things of *Apollonius Tyanæus the Magician* and *Philosopher*, in which he that was no Christian but a Pagan Philosopher himself affirmeth some not ignoble Philosophers to have been taken with *Apollonius's Magick*, including as I suppose in that number *Euphrates*, and a certain *Epicurean*.' And no doubt but this was the reason why *Philostratus* derogates so much from the authority of this *Meeragene*, affirming him to be ignorant of many things concerning *Apollonius* (ἢ γέ Μοιραγήν τεγοεντέον &c.) because *Meeragene* had thus represented *Apollonius* in his true colours as a Magician; whereas *Philostratus's* whole business and design was on the contrary to vindicate him from that imputation; the truth whereof notwithstanding may be sufficiently evinced, even from those very things that are recorded by *Philostratus* himself. Cudworth's Intellect. System, p. 267, 268.

lost, we cannot in many cases tell what *Philostratus*, who wrote at the distance of above 100 years from *Apollonius*, delivers to us upon the authority of *Damis*, nor consequently what additions he hath made himself to his testimony of those Miracles; which is a consideration that renders his history of very doubtful and suspected (2) credit.

And to say no more upon this head, if we take account of one of the chief and principal of *Apollonius's Miracles*, as it is recorded by *Philostratus*, viz. his raising a young woman to life again who was carried out for dead, it will not appear to be built upon sufficient proof and evidence. For whether there was any spark of life in her which her Physicians did not perceive, or whether she were really dead, is, says *Philostratus*, a matter of doubt not only to me, but was such to those who were present, when *Apollonius* seemed to bring her to life again (a). And indeed, as Mons. *Tillemont* well remarks (b), had

(2.) The life of Apollonius was first written by Damis, who was originally of Ninos (or Nineveh) the most intimate with him of all his disciples. And this life which was truly nothing else but memoirs very indifferently written, falling into the hands of Julia the Empress, the wife of Severus, she gave them to Philostratus, who from these and from what he could collect out of the works of Apollonius himself, and from some other memoirs, composed that history which we now have. He speaks of one Maximus Aegensis who had written a book concerning Apollonius, and of Maeragenes, who had written four books; but he would not concern himself with the last, whose narrative was not perhaps very favourable to his Hero. Tillemont's Life of Apollonius, p. 3, 4.

(a) Ἐστε συνθῆται τὸ Φυλής εὑπερ ἐν αὐτῇ ὃς ἐλεύθεροί τε
θεραπευούσις — εἰτε αὐτοτελεῖται τὸ Φυλής αὐτόδοτα λέ τε καὶ
εὑλαβεῖ, ἀρρόνθος οὐ κατάληκτος τύπος γέγονεν ὥκειοι μόνοι
ἄλλοι καὶ τοῖς ἀρρόνθοις. Philostrat. cited by Mr. Gurdon in
his sermons at Boyle's Lectures, p. 354.

(b) *Life of Apollonius*, p. 30, 31.

this

this Miracle been true, it must have been much more famous as *Eusebius* observes: and therefore supposing the account which *Philostratus* hath given of *Apollonius*'s Miracles to be a true history (which as I before observ'd it is not) yet such a doubtful and suspected Miracle ought never to be brought in competition with those Miracles of our Blessed Saviour in raising the dead to life again, that are recorded in the Gospel; which were every one of them, and particularly that of raising up *Lazarus*, so plain and uncontestable, that the Jews themselves, as I mention'd before, did not presume to deny or question the truth of them. And thus much concerning the pretended Miracles of *Apollonius Tyanæus*.

I proceed now to consider the fourth and last person which Mr *Woolston* hath added to the other three, of whom I have already treated, and whose Miracles are by him set in opposition to those of our Saviour Christ; and that is the famous Mr *Valentine Greatrak*. This person was a Justice of the Peace in the Kingdom of *Ireland*, and came into *England A.D. 1665*, and was said to cure many diseases only by stroaking the patients with his hand. Now in considering the case of this person I shall make the following observations.

1st. There is greater reason to believe the reality of those facts, which are ascrib'd to him, than of those of any of the three persons before-mentioned, because many of them were done publickly, and before great numbers of people; and many learned *Virtuosi*, particularly Mr *Boyle* and Dr *Henry More*, did endeavour to account for them by natural and mechanical principles (c), which however plausibly it might be attempted, yet

(c) *Echard's history of England*, Vol. iii. p. 153.
seemingly

seemingly there could be no ground at all for the doing of it, if the facts had not been thought to be real. But however,

2dly. Supposing the facts were all real that were reported of him, yet as appears by the third principle laid down in the beginning of this discourse (p. 13. 14.) this will not in the least affect the cause of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, since this person did not pretend to work cures by any Divine Authority or Commission, or to establish any new doctrines, and much less any that were contrary to those of the Gospel, in virtue of them; and therefore if they were really wrought, as they are said to be, they were (as a great Writer (d) well expresses it) merely Providential, and nothing more than particular and uncommon instances of God's Grace and Goodness; and as such they cannot in any wise derogate from the power and authority of Christ's Miracles, which were wrought in immediate and direct evidence and testimony of a Divine Commission. But,

3dly and lastly. There are several things and circumstances to be taken notice of in the facts themselves which are ascrib'd to this person, which take off in a very great measure from the miraculous nature of them. As,

1st. In those persons whom he is said to cure he usually chafed much, and rubb'd with some violence the parts affected; which was the reason why Mr *Boyle* and Dr *More* and others ascrib'd those cures to mechanical operation. And indeed tho' it may be very difficult in that way to account for those cures, yet on the other side it is very certain, that he who in the cure of distempers acts by Divine Help and Assistance has no need of using

(d) Vid. Smalbroke's *Vindicat.* part i. p. 28.

any external force and violence for the removal of them.

2dly. Mr. Greatrak himself did not pretend to cure all sorts of diseases : this appears from his own letter to Dr Hall Bishop of Chester, published by David Lloyd who examin'd his pretensions, the original of which is now preserv'd in the Bodleian library (e). In that letter he only pretends to cure some few distempers, but how he cured them, and why them only, he could give no account : and Dr Stubbs the Physician, who wrote in his behalf, did not pretend that he could restore any decays of nature.

3dly. He was frequently unsuccessful in curing diseases by stroking the patients, of which D. Lloyd gives particular instances in a Lady of quality, and another person in London, who was so far from being relieved by him, that he endured great misery by his operations.

4thly. He frequently used plaisters and proper medicines for the cure of distempers, and often-times without success ; and in the cure of the king's-evil and some other diseases, to which he pretended a Divine impulse, he sometimes fail'd, and then had recourse to the assistance of chirurgery and physick, as the same Author assures us ; which was probably the reason why some persons ascrib'd his cures to the credulity and imagination of the people, and to that strong conceit and opinion which they had of his power of healing, which seem'd to be confirm'd by his privately withdrawing himself from the Kingdom, and not being any more heard of (f). This is the substance of that account which we have of the Miracles ascrib'd to Mr Greatrak ; and if

(e) Vid. Smalbroke's *Vindication*, from p. 25. to p. 27.

(f) Vid. Echard's *Hist.* *ibid.*

we should (which there is some reason to question) suppose some of them to be real, as peculiar and uncommon instances of God's Providence, yet as his power was plainly limited to some particular diseases, as he used external force and natural means, and was oftentimes unsuccessful in the cure of them, he is surely never to be set up in competition with our Blessed Saviour Christ, to whom all the powers of nature were plainly subject, who never once fail'd of success in any thing that He attempted, and who by the bare word of His mouth did heal all manner of diseases, and even restore the dead to life again. And thus I hope I have fully vindicated the truth and authority of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles from the several objections which have been urged against them.

I proceed now in the second place, to make two or three useful observations from the foregoing discourse, in which I shall confirm the truth and certainty of the Gospel history, in which the Miracles of our Saviour are recorded. And,

1st. We have seen in the foregoing discourse what the nature of a Miracle is, and what proof and evidence the working of Miracles gives us of the authority of any Prophet ; it hath also been fully shewn, that if the Gospel be a true history, the Miracles of Christ were facts really perform'd, and were likewise much greater and more astonishing than any persons had ever done before him : there is now nothing more that is necessary to confirm us in a stedfast belief of those Miracles, and consequently in the acknowledgment of our Saviour's Divine Authority, but only to prove that the Gospel, in which those Miracles are contain'd, is a true history ; and this I shall endeavour to do by a few plain and

and clear arguments : but before I enter upon them, I think it very proper and necessary to make this one remark, *viz.* that in our judgment of Divine Things we ought to be guided and persuaded by the same degrees of evidence with which we rest satisfied in other matters.

Now if we enquire into the evidence which we have of the matters contain'd in antient history, we shall find that there are very few histories of note come down to us, which were written by persons who lived in the times when those things were done, which are deliver'd therein ; but they are mostly taken from histories that were extant in the times when those Authors liv'd, but are long since lost ; and sometimes they are taken from such histories as were themselves taken from others, and so the matters therein treated of are transmitted to us at the second or third hand ; and yet there are no persons among us who suspect the credit and disown the authority of those antient histories.

Thus for instance, there is no one who entertains any doubt concerning the person of *Alexander* the Great, and the main of his actions ; and yet, as a learned Author well observes (g), the chief and principal parts of his history are not written by any person who lived near upon the times when those things were done. 'Tis true indeed the life and actions of this great Prince were wrote by *Ptolemy* the first King of *Egypt* of that name, and by *Aristobulus*, who were two of his chief and principal commanders ; but those histories are long since lost : and *Arrian* who read both of them, and compiled his history from them, does yet declare that in many things they differ'd from each other ; and therefore

(g) *Leng's Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, p. 440.

in writing his history from them, he was oblig'd to follow that judgment and opinion which seem'd to him most rational and probable. And the like may be said of many other Historians of great note, both *Greek* and *Roman*: and yet there is no one who doubts of the truth of the chief and principal affairs contain'd in those histories. And therefore it will be an argument of great partiality, or something worse in us, if we do not pass the same judgment on the Writers of the four Gospels, and since their Histories have been with the greatest veneration receiv'd in the world for so many ages, if we do not give the same credit and authority to them that we do to other antient histories. But because the salvation of mankind is a matter of much greater consequence than any of the affairs of this world can possibly be, and there should be no reasonable apology and excuse pretended in favour of infidelity, it has pleas'd God to give us much greater evidence of the truth of the Gospel, than can possibly be alledg'd in behalf of any antient history whatever, as will easily be acknowledged if we attend to these following considerations.

1st. The History of the four Gospels was written by those persons whose names they bear; this is evident not only from the testimony of all the antient Writers of the Church, who ascrib'd them to those persons, but also from hence that the most early Hereticks, who forg'd other Gospels in the name of some Evangelist or Apostle in order to support and countenance their pernicious errors, did yet always acknowledge that the four Gospels which we now receive were written by St *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and (b) *John*: and therefore it must be own'd to be a very con-

(u) Vid. Gurdon's *Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, p. 469, &c.
siderable

fiderable advantage and recommendation of those Gospels, that they were written by those persons to whom they are ascrib'd, which will appear more plainly from what shall be said hereafter.

2dly. The four Gospels were written by such persons as were eye-witnesses of the facts that are mentioned in them ; and this is an advantage which few antient histories in the world can pretend to, as was before observ'd. Thus says St John (and it holds as true of his and the other Gospels, as it does of his Epistle where he mentions it) *that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have look'd upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, 1 Epist. i. 1, 3.* And then the matters of fact contain'd in the Gospels, such as the Actions and Miracles of our Blessed Saviour, to which the Evangelists and Apostles gave their attestation, were things in which they could not possibly be deceiv'd, as Spinoza vainly suggests, and makes that a refuge for his infidelity, *viz.* that tho' the Apostles were themselves of unquestionable probity and sincerity, yet they were deceiv'd and impos'd upon in many of those things which they have deliver'd to us as true (i). But I say this could not possibly be, because the matters of fact which we are now speaking of were the objects of their senses, and such things as they could not avoid having full satisfaction concerning the truth of them : and if any Infidel among us is so obstinate as to say that the senses of mankind are not to be depended upon in judging of those things which are the proper objects of them, and with the Scepticks of old shall assert that there is no such thing as

(i) Vid. Gurdon's *Sermons*, p. 336, 337.

truth and certainty in nature, for my part I am resolv'd not to contend with him, since he is one of those unreasonable persons who are never to be disputed with, because they deny the first principles of science. Tho' we may particularly observe of this sort of men, that it is only in Religion they are thus sceptical, and that they never admit these speculations in matters of civil life ; but notwithstanding all their pretended doubts of the truth and certainty of things, are peremptory and resolute enough in such cases wherein their temporal interest is concern'd (k). If then we may safely rely upon the evidence of our senses in such things as are the proper objects of them, I would fain know what greater evidence we can have of any sensible truths than the Apostles had concerning the Actions and Mi-

(k) *There are some speculations which men never live by, how vehemently soever they contend for them. A Sceptick who pretends there is nothing certain, and will dispute with you as long as you please about it, yet will not venture his own arguments so far as to leap into fire and water, nor to stand before the mouth of a loaded cannon, when you give fire to it. Sherlock on death, 8vo, p. 162, 163.*

If the affections and interest of men were as deeply concern'd, and as sensibly touch'd in the truth of mathematical propositions, as they are in the principles of Morality and Religion, we should find that when a proposition stood in their way, and lay cross to their interest, tho' it were never so clearly demonstrated, yet they would raise a dust about it and make a thousand cavils, and fence even against the evidence of a demonstration ; they would palliate their error with all the skill and art they could ; and tho' the absurdity of it was never so great and palpable, yet they would hold it fast against all sense and reason, and face down mankind in the obstinate defence of it ; for we have no reason to doubt, but that they who in matters of Religion will believe directly contrary to what they see, would if they had the same interest and passions to sway them in the case, believe contrary to the clearest mathematical demonstration : for where there is an absolute resolution not to be convinc'd, all the reason and evidence in the world signifies nothing. Tillotson, Vol. ii. p. 239. See the place.

racles

racles of our Blessed Saviour, which they saw done before their eyes, and that not only once and by chance, but frequently and in innumerable instances, and that for the space of three or four years together. It is very evident then that the Apostles could not possibly be deceiv'd themselves in those matters ; neither could they possibly deceive us in the accounts which they have given us of these things, as we shall see presently. And *Spinoza* himself acknowledges the same as was just now observ'd, and concerning the evidence of Christ's Resurrection hath made one remark that is very peculiar and extraordinary, and that is, " That the circumstances of our Saviour's appearance to his Disciples after his Resurrection were so strong, that he does not only say that they believ'd what they reported of his appearing to them, but that even Infidels would have thought they had seen Him, if they had been present in those places in which He appear'd to his Disciples." (l) This then is another great recommendation of the Gospel history, that it does not come down to us at the second or third hand, as many histories that are yet very valuable and excellent have done, but it was written by those persons who were eye-witnesses of those things which they deliver'd to us.

3dly. The Apostles and Evangelists have given us a stronger proof of their faithfulness and sincerity, than can be alleg'd in behalf of any other Historians whatever ; for not to mention the plain doctrines of that Religion they preach'd, which absolutely forbid all deceit and falsehood upon pain of damnation, and the inimitable excellency and goodness of their lives, which were

(l) Vid. *Gurdon's Sermons*, p. 356, 357.

sufficient

sufficient to remove the least suspicion of deceit and fraud ; I say not to mention this, the propagating of the truths contain'd in the Gospel was absolutely inconsistent with all their interest and happiness in this world. For as on the one hand they might have made their own terms with the Jews and Gentiles, if they would have own'd themselves to be in an error, and declared Christianity to be a cheat (*m*) ; so on the other side they knew the rage and inveteracy both of Jews and Gentiles to be so great against them, that the maintaining and defending the truth of their Religion would unavoidably be attended with the severest persecutions and most cruel deaths.

This was what they expected, according as their great Master foretold it should happen unto them, *Mark* xiii. 9. *Luke* xxi. 12. *John* xvi. 2. yet so fix'd and resolute were they in this profession, that the utmost terrors and bitterest persecutions, which their enemies could threaten or execute upon them, could not prevail with any one of them to depart from it ; but they immovably persisted in the defence and maintenance of the Christian Faith to the last drop of their blood.

And now we may ask our modern Infidels whether any of their most admired and celebrated Historians could ever pretend to such a proof of their honesty and sincerity, as the Writers of the Gospel have given us, or whether any persons who have fram'd an imposture did not always act in a quite different manner, and lay the foundation of their imposture in the hopes and expectation of worldly interest and prosperity. So that here is another powerful argument to recommend the faith of the Gospel History, *viz.* that it was

(*m*) Vid. *Gurdon's Sermons*, p. 457.

written by such persons as were not only eye-witnesses of those things which they have deliver'd to us, but were also men of unquestionable probity and sincerity. There is only one thing which I know of that our adversaries can possibly object to this, and that is, that tho' the Apostles and Evangelists might not possibly be induced to concur in such a fraud by the hopes of any worldly happiness and prosperity, yet they might perhaps be tempted thereto by ambition, by the honour and glory which would redound to them on being the authors and founders of a new Religion.

This is an argument which they esteem to be of some force ; because they think there have been instances of persons even in the Heathen world, who have undergone great hardships and submitted to death it self upon the principle of fame, that they might be admir'd and celebrated by posterity. But supposing there might be some instances given of this kind, yet this could not possibly be the case of the Holy Apostles : for there is nothing in the character and behaviour of the Holy Apostles, which can give us the least grounds to think that they were influenc'd by ambition ; but on the contrary, the great humility of their deportment and their manifest contempt of the world are sufficient to remove any such suspicion. But however, supposing that their ambition of being the Authors of a new Religion might lie conceal'd under the specious shew of humility and contempt of the world ; yet in the

4th place, That which will effectually demonstrate the sincerity of the Apostles and Evangelists, and confirm the truth of the Gospel History beyond all contradiction, is the consideration of the time when it was first published to the world. Now had the Apostles and Evangelists been impostors and deceivers, and the matters

of fact contain'd in the Gospel History been the effect of their contrivance and invention, they would certainly, if you suppose them to be endued but with common sense and understanding, have publish'd them in an age which was distant from that wherein those facts were pretended to be done, and when there were no persons remaining alive who could fully detect the error and falsehood of them ; for this the very nature and design of an imposture plainly supposes : but so far was it from this, that they publish'd their account of these things within a very few years after they were done, and which is more, in the same country and among the same people where they were said to be wrought, and when there were many thousand persons living who could sufficiently attest the truth or falsehood of them. Thus according to the best accounts, St *Matthew* publish'd his Gospel *A. D. 41.* which was about eight years after our Saviour's Crucifixion. St *Mark's* Gospel was published about two years after, *A. D. 43.* St *Luke's* Gospel *A. D. 61.* and last of all St *John's* Gospel, about *A. D. 97 (n).* Now tho' at the time of writing this last Gospel (which was design'd as a supplement to the other three) it may reasonably be suppos'd, that the greatest part of those persons were deceas'd who were alive when our Blessed Saviour was upon the earth and saw his Miracles, yet this cannot with any reason be affirm'd of the other three Gospels, especially of the two first, which were publish'd within ten years after our Saviour's Crucifixion, when with good reason we may conclude that the greatest number of those who were eye-witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles were still living. And that which ought to satisfy the most obstinate Infidel, that the Apostles have

(n) Vid. Mr Echard's *Ecclesiastical History*, 8vo. p. 262, 265, 331, 420.

given

given us a true and exact account of the time in which the Gospel-affairs were transacted, is this, that it perfectly agrees with that account which *Tacitus*, one of the best and most valuable of all the Heathen Historians, hath given of this matter; for speaking of the beginning of Christianity, he tells us that the Author of this sect was Jesus Christ, who in the reign of *Tiberius Cæsar* was put to death by *Pontius Pilate Governor of Judæa* (o).

Now this being so, let the Apostles and Evangelists be suppos'd to be never so much influenc'd by ambition, yet if they are allowed to be men of common sense and understanding, they must have seen that it would be impossible to gain any number of men to the profession of Christianity, the truth and evidence of which was by themselves built upon miraculous facts said to be done among them, if those facts had not been really wrought as they were pretended; since in that case every person of the meanest apprehension, who liv'd at that time in that country, might easily have replied, that he was very well assur'd that religion must be false; because he knew very well that no such facts were done in that time and place, as they were said to be.

And indeed those who endeavour to advance and propagate a new sect in religion by fraud and imposture never dare to build the evidence of their cause upon publick facts, of which every one may plainly judge; but they always use a quite different method to deceive mankind, and that is, either by fallacious reasonings, or which is more common, by a pretence to Inspiration; and by these means they first draw over some weak and ignorant persons of the multitude to their party, and so as the generations of mankind encrease, their own party encreases with

(o) *Tacit. Annal. Lib. xv.*

them, till at length they become a growing and flourishing sect in Religion. Whereas the method which the Apostles and Evangelists took was quite different ; they did not endeavour to convert the Jews to the belief of Christianity by the force of their own reasoning, but upon the strength and evidence of several plain and undeniable facts which were publickly wrought among them ; and since they used that method for their conversion, every one must easily see that it was impossible they should ever have prevail'd in it, if those miraculous facts to which they appeal'd had not been evident and indisputable.

And when upon the strength and virtue of Christ's Miracles, and particularly that of His Resurrection from the dead, they afterwards attempted the conversion of the Gentiles, and the more effectually to gain their assent to the doctrines of Christianity declar'd them selves to be Divinely Inspired, they worked several plain and incontestable Miracles among them ; which was a manifest proof of the veracity of their report concerning Christ's Miracles and of their own Inspiration.

And besides this there were two other considerations, *viz.* the extreme adherence and partiality which both Jews and Gentiles had for their own Religion (*p*), and the great advance and progress

(*p*) *The account which is given of the Jews by such Writers as liv'd near the time when the Gospel was first preached, sufficiently shew their fondness for the ceremonies of their religion. Juvenal tells us, that they would not shew the most common acts of civility, such as the putting a man right when he was out of his way, or directing him to a place where he might find water, to any but such as were of the same religion.*

Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti *Juv. Sat. 14.*
Quæsumus ad fontem solos deducere verpos. *v. 104, 5.*

And we may observe from Horace, that they were taken notice of in his time, as a sect of religion that was most industrious in making Proselytes.

gress of Learning * at that time, which still encreas'd the impossibility of imposing upon mankind by false and counterfeited Miracles. And therefore since the Apostles grounded the truth of

— Ac veluti
Judaï, cogemus in hanc concedere Turbam.

Hor. Lib. 1. Sat. 4. v. ult. Vid. Grot. in Matt. v. 43.

We may easily guess, and so might the Apostles, what sort of entertainment they were to meet with from a people so much wedded to their own religion. And tho' the Apostles at first allow'd converts from Judaism to retain many of the ceremonies of their religion together with Christianity, and were even so complaisant to them as to oblige the Gentile Converts to abstain from some things that were most disagreeable to the Jews, such as the eating things that had been offered to idols, and blood; yet there was no reason to think that these allowances would satisfy the Jews, because they must see that the main part of their religion, the Temple service, must sink if Christianity prevail'd, and that the Apostles only permitted without laying stress upon any other ceremonies of their religion. Neither could the Apostles look for any better quarter from the Gentiles, especially if they offer'd to make any Proselytes from that religion; they must foresee that they should be hated by them for making profession of a religion different from their own, as they saw their own countrymen the Jews were universally detested by them for the same reason; and that reasons of State, as well as those of Religion, would oblige every Heathen Government to suppress, if possible, those that oppos'd the established superstition, and to take away the lives and liberties of such as would be judg'd by them disturbers of the State, for endeavouring to carry off mens minds from the Government-worship. And we find in fact that Christians were so generally hated at Rome when Christianity first appear'd there, that when the City was set on fire by Nero, and the people generally believ'd it was done by his order, yet they were pleas'd to see the Christians suffer as Incendiaries. For Tacitus tells us, "that when Nero laid the burning of the City to the Christians charge, they were not so much found guilty by any force of evidence, as by the universal abhorrence which every body had of that sort of people. Convicti odio humani generis. Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. Vid. Cave Histor. Literar. Vol. i. p. 61, 62." People believ'd them innocent as to the firing of Rome, and yet were pleas'd to see them punished as Incendiaries. It was not much doubted, as Tacitus tells us, that Nero himself was the Incendiary, and yet the aversion was so strong against the Christians, that compassion which usually attends upon the miserable,

when

* Vid. Gurdon's Sermons, p. 456, &c.

of Christianity upon the evidence of those Miracles which our Saviour wrought, the numbers of those who were thereupon immediately converted to the Christian Faith is a clear proof and demonstration of the truth and reality of those Miracles. Accordingly we find in the *Acts of the Apostles* what prodigious numbers were daily added to the Church in their time (q); and in an age or two after the Apostles, a very considerable part of the then known world gave in their names to Christ and became his Disciples, notwithstanding the many and severe persecutions which were rais'd by the Heathen powers to terrify them therefrom.

And that which is very remarkable in this matter of the first conversions to Christianity, is the account which *Eusebius* gives us of the fifteen Bishops of *Jerusalem*, who governed that Church from the first establishment thereof to the reign of the Emperor *Adrian*, when the Jews were finally destroy'd, viz. that they were all of them Jews by nation (r).

Now if we consider the state and condition of the Christian Bishops at that time, what small inducements either of worldly honour or profit there were to engage them in that Office, and how they were much more liable to the rage and fury of persecution than other men, we may very reasonably conclude, that so many eminent Persons among the Jews would never have taken the Government of that Church upon them, and thereby have exposed themselves to so manifest a danger, if they had not been convinced beyond all doubt

when they are believed to be innocent, could not be raised by all their sufferings: and therefore 'tis plain, whilst this aversion lasted, there could be no hopes for the Apostles of living tolerably easy with them. *Gurdon's Sermons at Boyle's Lectures, p. 440, &c.*

(q) *Acts ii. 41. iv. 4. v. 14.*

(r) *Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. iv. cap. 5.*

of

of the truth and reality of those Miracles upon which the Religion of Christ was built and establish'd. And as the time in which the Evangelists publish'd their Gospels is a sufficient proof of their sincerity, so in the

5th and last place, The multitude of copies which were immediately transcribed of those Gospels, and that in places far distant from each other, and the great number of translations which were made of them into several languages of the World, is a just and reasonable evidence to us of the genuineness and authority of those Gospels, which we now receive as written by them (s); since by means of these many copies and translations, the truth and purity of the Sacred Text are sufficiently secured against all corruption. 'Tis true indeed by the great multitude of those copies, the various lections have amounted to a prodigious number; and it could not possibly be otherwise, unless (as a learned Writer (t) well observes) Providence had so ordered it, that in millions of copies transcribed in so many ages and nations all the Notaries and Writers, who made it their trade and livelihood, should be infallible and impeccable. But these various lections are so far from rendering the Sacred Text precarious, as some authors have vainly imagined, that next to the Providence of God they are the greatest security we have of the purity and genuineness of it; since by this means the errors and mistakes which have fallen into some copies have been clearly rectified and amended by the use of others. And as without the use of those many copies, the errors in the Sacred Text would have been very numerous, and some omissions perhaps irrepa-

(s) Vid. Grot. de Veritat. lib. iii. §. 15. *Bishop Gibson's third Pastoral Letter* p. 63, to 68. (t) *Phileleuth. Lipsiens. Remarks on Free Thinking*, part. i. p. 76.

rable,

table, so I make not the least doubt, but if we had the assistance of more copies, there might still be something found to add to the beauty at least, if not to the perfection of it.

Tis true indeed there have been instances given of designed omissions and alterations in some antient copies of the New Testament (u), but they chiefly concern'd things that were of no consequence to Religion, such as our Saviour's weeping over *Jerusalem*, *Luke xix. 41.* which was left out of some copies that were thought most correct, because it was judg'd to be a passion unbecoming our Saviour. An instance of design'd alteration is said to be in *John vii. 8.* where our Blessed Saviour told His Disciples that He should not go up to the feast of Tabernacles, to which he yet went up, as appears from *ver. 10.* St *Jerome* observes, that *Porphyry* had marked this passage as an argument of our Saviour's inconstancy; and therefore that the particle *εκ* which signifies *not*, was in some copies chang'd into *επει* which signifies *not as yet*, to avoid the force of this objection. But not to mention that this calumny of *Porphyry* was wholly impertinent; since supposing the true reading to be *εκ ανθεινω* *I go not up to this feast*, yet as Interpreters rightly observe our Blessed Saviour might mean no more by it, than that He did not design to go up to the Feast in that publick manner, which some of His Relations seem'd to desire, *ver. 3, 4.* I say not to mention this, *επει ανθεινω I go not up as yet unto this feast* may as well be allowed to be the true reading as the other, since it is so read by *Nonnus* the famous Paraphraſt, and by *Chrysostom* and *Euthymius*, and in innumerable Greek copies, and particularly in the most antient

(u) Vid. *Gurdon's Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, p. 494, &c.

and famous copy of the *Vatican*, as an eminent Critic observes (w).

And to mention only one instance more; the 15th of *Mark* ver. 25. where it is said that the time of our Saviour's Crucifixion was at the *third* hour, is said to have been altered to reconcile it with *John* xix. 14. where it is said to be about the *sixth* hour. And yet it is observ'd, that some copies of *St John* had the *third* as well as some copies of *St Mark* the *sixth*; in all which instances it is plain, that these supposed alterations in different copies do not in the least affect the Essentials of Christianity. And if in a matter of Faith some passages in the New Testament were designedly altered, as they are said to be in the time of the *Arian* controversy, as 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. *God was manifested in the flesh*, is said to be altered by the *Arians* into *which was manifested in the flesh*, the better to avoid the force of the word *God*; and the famous text in 1 *Job.* v. 7. of the *Three that bear record in Heaven*, is supposed by some to have been inserted by the Orthodox Christians to serve their purposes; (tho' this matter does not relate to the Gospels, with which I am concern'd at present, but to the Epistles) yet thus much may not improperly be said of these alterations, that if the *Arians* did alter the first of these texts as is here supposed, it could be of no service at all to their cause, since there was a much greater number of copies of the Epistles at the time of the *Arian* controversy than there were of the Gospels, when the alterations of the Gospels before-mentioned were supposed to have been made; and therefore if the *Arians* had altered that text in some few copies that fell into their hands, they could not but know that the true reading would be still preserv'd in many copies which they had not in their possession, and which in many di-

(w) *Lud. de Dieu ap. Poli Synopf. Critic. in loc.*

stant parts of the world were in the hands of the Orthodox Christians. And I cannot imagine of what use it would be to their cause to make the alteration, since they must needs know that Christ was called God in many passages of Scripture, which were left unaltered.

There are indeed many learned men who earnestly contend that the reading, *which was manifested*, is the old and true reading*. But for my part, I think it cannot possibly be the true reading; because as many good Critics have observ'd †, several parts of the same period cannot properly be accommodated to that sense. For tho' the Interpretation of *Grotius* might be admitted (which yet I think sounds very harsh and seems forced) *viz.* that by the mystery of *Godliness* *which was manifested in the flesh* is meant, that the Heavenly Gospel was first made known, not by Angels but by mortal men, and as to their external appearance weak and frail men, *to wit*, Christ and His || Apostles; (which manifestation may, I conceive, with much greater propriety be ascribed to Christ as God, who by St John is said to have come in the flesh, *i Epist. iv. 2.* and who again observes in his Gospel, *chap. i. ver. 14.* that the *Word*, whom he had before affirmed to be *God* in *ver. 1.* was *made flesh*, or *become flesh*, (οὐνός οὐρανός εἰπεῖτο) which seems to differ but very little from that passage in this text Θεὸς ἐπανεπώθη ἐν σαρκὶ *GOD was manifested in the flesh*) and tho' we might allow of Dr Clarke's interpretation, how the mystery of *Godliness* might be seen of Angels ‡, and also that it might be preach'd to the

* Vid. Dr Clarke's *Sermons*, Vol. vi. p. 191. Poli Synops. Critic. in loc. † Vid. Poli Synops. Critic. ibid.

|| Vid. Grot. Comment. in loc.

‡ *This perhaps is the meaning of that obscure text i Tim. iii. 16. The mystery of Godliness (or God) manifest in the flesh, was seen of Angels; seen not in the literal sense, for that was*

the Gentiles ; (which expression is however in Holy Scripture frequently used of Christ as well as of His Gospel, 1 Cor. i. 23. 2 Cor. iv. 5. Phil. i. 15, to 19.) I say tho' this might be allowed, yet the appellation *justified in the Spirit* does undoubtedly relate to the Person of Christ, and plainly signifies the Testimony which the Holy Spirit gave at His Baptism of His being the true Messias and the *Son of God*, Matth. iii. 16, 17. and by the Miracles which he wrought || by Him, Matth. xii. 22, to 33. and lastly by raising Him from the dead, Rom. i. 4. 1 Pet. iii. 18. And so likewise the last part of this period cannot, without manifest absurdity, be applied to any thing but to our Saviour Christ, *viz.* received up into glory. For tho' the learned Grotius would fain interpret even this of the Gospel of Christ, *viz.* that it was gloriously exalted, or highly esteemed, by reason of the superior sanctity of it's precepts to those of any other institution, yet he could not produce any passage of Scripture in which the phrase ἀνέβη εἰς οὐρανόν received up into glory was used in that sense ; but endeavours to defend his interpretation from that passage in Acts xiii. 48. (where it is said, that when Paul and Barnabas turn'd from the Jews upon account of their obstinacy and contemptuous treatment of them, and preach'd the Gospel to the Gentiles, they rejoiced and ἀπόστολοι τὸν λόγον τιμοῦσι, glorified the word of the Lord) and also from the words εἰς οὐρανόν signifying gloriously as well as in glory. But this is nothing at all to the purpose ; for tho' there is no doubt but the words εἰς οὐρανόν may be rendered glorious or gloriously, as well as in glory, and seems to be so understood in 2 Cor. iii. 8. and Phil. iv. 19. yet the force of the Criticism does not depend upon the words εἰς οὐρανόν,

no mystery, but understood, apprehended, made plain to the Angels, who were before in that sense desirous to look into it.
Clarke ibid. || Vid. Hammond in loc.

but upon the whole phrase taken together, *αναβολη εις ουρανον*, which plainly signifies our Blessed Saviour's Ascension into the Kingdom of Heaven, the happiness of which is frequently called in Scripture by the name of Glory. *Rom. viii. 18.* *2 Cor. iv. 17. & passim.* For thus we find the word *αναβολη* used by St Luke, when he is speaking of that Ascension, *Act. i. 2.* and again *ver. 9.* where he makes mention of it, he useth a word of much the same signification. *And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up from them, and a cloud (υπελασεν) received Him out of their sight.* But nevertheless, tho' I am fully persuaded that the true reading of this Text is, *God was manifested in the flesh*, as it is now read in our Bibles, notwithstanding what *Grotius* and others alledge to the contrary, and therefore thought it proper to observe thus much in vindication of it; yet on the other side I am much inclin'd to think, that the different reading of this Text was rather owing to the negligence and mistakes of the Transcribers, than to any design'd alteration by the *Arians*, not only for the reason above-mention'd, but also because it is certain that it was so read in many antient copies, (notwithstanding what the learned *Beza* asserts to the contrary) and likewise in some of the old versions *.

And as to the other text in *1 John v. 7.* I cannot see that it was in any wise necessary to the cause of the Orthodox Christians to insert it into St *John's* Epistle; since tho' it be true that there is no other Text in Scripture, in which it is said expressly that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are One, yet there are innumerable Texts in which the same thing is asserted and maintained by clear consequence; as in all those passages of Scripture,

* Vid. *Grot.* & *Gothofred.* in *Loc. Phil. Lipsiens.* *Remarks,* part. i. p. 83.

where the Son and Holy Ghost are said to be God, *John* i. 1. *Rom.* ix. 5. *Acts* v. 3, 4. *Luke* i. 35. (y) where Christ is said to be the Creator of all things, *John* i. 3. *Coloss.* i. 16. and both the Son and the Holy Ghost have Divine Attributes and Perfections ascrib'd to them, *John* xvi. 30. *Rev.* i. 17. *Heb.* xiii. 8. *Rev.* xvii. 14. *Isa.* ix. 6. *Acts* x. 36. *Heb.* ix. 14. *1 Cor.* ii. 10, 11. *John* xvi. 13. For since the Holy Scriptures as well as natural reason assure us, that there is but one God, *Isa.* xliv. 8. xlv. 5. and yet the same Scriptures in many places do clearly testify, that the Son and Holy Ghost are God, the consequence is plain, that They must be One and the Same with the Supreme God ; unless the Scriptures, when they apply the term God to the Son and the Holy Ghost, use it in a metaphorical and equivocal sense, which surely it will be a great dis-honour and reflection upon the Holy Scriptures to suppose (z), and which, let men think what they please, cannot possibly be for these plain reasons, because the Son and Holy Ghost are joined together with God the Father in the form of Baptism, *Matt.* xxviii. 19. and in the Apostolical Benediction, *2 Cor.* xiii. 13. and because the act of Creation (which is certainly a Divine Prerogative) (*vid. Rom.* i. 20.) is ascrib'd to the Son, and Divine Worship is requir'd by God the Father to be paid to Him, *John* v. 23. *Heb.* i. 6. and because the essential Attributes and Perfections of the Divine Nature are attributed both to the Son and Holy Ghost, as was before observ'd ; all which would certainly never have been done in the Holy Scriptures, if the Son and the Holy Ghost were God only in an equivocal sense ; since to those, whom the Scriptures call by the name of God in

(y) Vid. Pearson *on the Creed*, p. 315.

(z) Vid. *Dr Waterland's first Defence of his Queries*, Quer. iii. p. 47, &c.

a metaphorical and equivocal sense, such as Angels and Magistrates, &c. we never find any thing of this nature attributed.

From all which I conclude that there is not so much ground to believe, that there have been any additions and alterations made in the antient copies of the New Testament with respect to matters of Faith, as is said to be.

But be that as it will, there are two considerations which will effectually secure and ascertain to us the purity and genuineness of the Sacred Text.

1st. That tho' there have been many great errors and mistakes, and some design'd omissions and alterations, in several copies of the New Testament, yet by reason of the great multitude of those copies, those errors have been clearly rectified, since the true reading hath been always preserved in some or other of them ; and as for the design'd omissions and alterations they were only (as hath been already shewn) in matters of a trifling and indifferent nature, and such as did not concern the Essentials of Religion, and yet they were capable of being amended and rectified the same way. And,

2dly. If we should suppose that there have been some few wilful alterations and corruptions of the Sacred Text in matters of moment, (which from what has been said before there is no reason to grant) yet they cannot in any wise endanger the purity of the Gospel, or the Essentials of the Christian Religion; since all that is necessary to salvation, both in point of Faith and Practice, is so interwoven with the substance and body of the New Testament, that it cannot possibly be effaced or destroy'd by any mistakes or designs of men. And as an incomparable Critic observes (c), " take never so many copies of the New Testament, and

(c) *Phileleuth. Lips. Remarks on Free Thinking*, part. i. p. 76.

" put

“ put them into the hands of a knave or a fool,
 “ and yet with the most sinistrous and absurd
 “ choice, he shall not extinguish the light of
 “ any one chapter, nor so disguise Christianity
 “ but that every feature of it will be still the
 “ same (d).”

And this is sufficient to satisfy any reasonable man, that the Gospels which we now receive are to all intents and purposes the same, as were at first deliver'd to the world by the Evangelists and Apostles ; and tho' God hath not miraculously interpos'd to preserve the Sacred Books from all errors and mistakes, as some men have unreasonably argued He should have done (e), yet in His good Providence He hath open'd an effectual way in the manner above-mention'd for the amending and rectifying of those errors, and hath so contriv'd and digested the Revelation of His Will made by His Son, as to secure it against all possibility of corruption. And I will be bold to say (and I think all men ought to rest satisfied therewith) that the Edition of the New Testament which we now have is as perfect and compleat, as in all reason could be expected or desired, and is with respect both to the genuineness of the sense, and the exactness and propriety of the language, more correct and accurate than any Greek Author now extant in the world.

Secondly, If the Miracles of our Blessed Saviour had not been really wrought, as in the Gospel they are said to be, there is no doubt but

(d) Tho' there is a great variety (in the readings of the New Testament) yet no new doctrine can be raised from thence, nor no receiv'd one confuted ; no history of any moment, in regard to the truth of the Christian Religion, which was before believ'd from the Books of the New Testament, is from thence to be rejected, nor any that was before unknown to be collected from the various readings. Le Clerc's Notes on Grot. de veritat. lib. iii. §. 15. See the place in Grotius.

(e) Vid. Phil. Lips. Remarks, part i. p. 76, 77.

there

there would have been some hints and observations in the memoirs and histories of the first ages of the Church, which would have contradicted the Scripture account of Christ's Miracles ; for this is what usually happens in such cases, and might very reasonably have been expected in a matter of so great importance : but that there was no such thing in any of the primitive records (tho' many of them have been long since lost) is very evident from hence, that *Celsus* and *Julian* and *Porphyry*, who liv'd near the times when these Miracles were said to be done, could not have fail'd to have known them, and consequently to have cited them, if there had been any ; for as a learned Divine (f) well observes, “ they were “ all men of fine parts and great reading, and “ as they professedly wrote against Christianity, “ they could not but have cited their Authors, “ had they known any who had denied the facts “ of Christ ; but this being never done, 'tis, “ says he, so great a presumption in favour of “ the truth of the Miracles done by Jesus, that “ it amounts even to evidence for them.” And since many counterfeit Miracles, not only of the modern Church of *Rome*, but also in former ages of the world, have been fairly detected ; and where plain and direct proof of their falsehood hath been wanting, there have yet been the strongest reasons to suspect the reality of them, because they were not wrought with sufficient publick evidence, and were plainly design'd to support the secular interests of men, as particularly in the times when Monkery met with the greatest encouragement (g) ; I say, since the case of false

(f) Dr Sykes's *Essay on the Truth of the Christian Religion*,
P. 143.

(g) In almost every page of the histories of those days (the Monkish times) we meet with Miracles wrought in favour of the friends and protectors of the Monks. Rapin's *History of England*, Vol. i. p. 372.

and

and counterfeit Miracles hath been such ; that the Miracles of Christ, tho' wrought in the most publick manner in the presence of enemies as well as friends, were never yet disproved in any one instance, but have still maintain'd their credit and reputation in the world, and been attest'd to by the greatest enemies which Christianity ever had ; and that notwithstanding the severest enquiry made into them in the time when they were done, and the strictest examination of all ages ever since, is, I think, a clear proof and demonstration of the Truth and Reality of them. To which we may add what the aforesaid learned Author judiciously observes, *viz.* " that any concession of the facts done by Jesus (which yet is often made by the antient adversaries to Christianity) could not arise from any feats of offending the Supreme Powers, nor of drawing upon themselves any inconveniences from the people ; for when *Celsus* and *Porphyry* wrote, the Governing Powers were open enemies to Christianity, and Christians were in a persecuted state. *Julian* was Emperor himself, and wanted no will to have brought about his designs ; nay, he once had been a Christian, and had employ'd his pains in the study of the Christian Religion : could he therefore have charged the Evangelists with falsehood, or had he been able to have denied the facts which Jesus did, he could be under no fears, nor under any temptations to allow them (b)."

Thirdly, We have this further proof and confirmation of the Truth of the Gospel-History, that several particular and remarkable passages

(b) *Dr Sykes's Essay*, p. 143.

of that History are confirm'd by concurrent testimonies of prophane and unquestionably unprejudiced Authors. Many of these testimonies are related by *Grotius* in his admirable Book *De Verit.* *Relig. Christianæ Lib.* ii. §. 5. & *Lib.* iii. §. 14. as he hath in *Lib.* i. §. 16. given us a very large collection of the testimonies of the Antients concerning the historical passages in the Old Testament. It may not be amiss to mention two or three of those testimonies concerning matters of fact mention'd in the New Testament, to which the learned Dr *S. Clark* hath added a few more from other Writers.

Thus, that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived in *Judea* at the time when the Gospel relates, is affirm'd by *Tacitus* in the passage above-mentioned (p. 99.) and acknowledg'd by all Authors who have written since that time. Many particulars likewise of the Gospel History concerning *John the Baptist*, *Herod* and *Pilate*, are largely recorded by *Josephus*; not to mention the famous testimony which *Josephus* himself gives of Jesus, because it is by some suspected not to be genuine; tho' as Mr *Echard* observes (i) it is certainly very antient, and tho' some modern Critics have doubted of it and argued against it, yet, says he, we do not find that the Antients ever did; and which is a great argument of the genuineness of that passage, it is, as Dr *Clarke* observes, found in all the antient Copies of that book (k). The Star which appear'd at Christ's Birth, and the journey of the Wise Men thereupon, are both mention'd by *Chalcidius the Platonist*, who flourish'd about

(i) *Eccles. Hist.* 8^o. p. 410. sub A.D. 94.

(k) *Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, part ii. prop. 13. §. 11.

A. D.

A. D. 330. (l) I know that this Philosopher is by some persons affirm'd to have been a Christian and Archdeacon of the Church of *Carthage*, but it is an affirmation without any just ground, as the learned Dr *Cave* hath observed from several expressions in that work which he hath published, which cannot be reconcil'd with the supposition of his being a Christian (m).

Many of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles, particularly His healing the Lame and the Blind, and casting out of Devils, as they are matters of fact, are expressly own'd by the most implacable enemies of Christianity, such as *Celsus* and *Julian*, and the Authors of the Jewish *Talmud* (n). *Herod*'s causing all the children in *Bethlehem* under two years old to be slain, and a reflection made upon him on that occasion by the Emperor *Augustus*, are related by *Macrobius* (o), who liv'd towards the end of the fourth century; he tells us, that when *Augustus* heard that *Herod*'s son was kill'd among the infants under two years old, whom *Herod* had commanded to be slain, he said, it was better to have been *Herod*'s hog.

(l) Et quoque alia sanctior & venerabilior Historia, &c. There is another more Holy and Venerable History, which relates the appearance of a new Star, not to foretel diseases and death, but the descent of a Venerable God to preserve mankind, and to shew favour to the affairs of mortals; which Star the Wise Men of Chaldaea observing as they travell'd in the night, and being very well skill'd in viewing the Heavenly bodies, they are said to have sought after the new birth of this God; and having found that Majesty in a Child, they paid him worship, and made such vows as were agreeable to so great a God. Chaleid. Comment. on *Timæus*, ap. *Grot.* Annotat. ad lib. iii. §. 14.

(m) *Cave Histor. Literar.* Vol. i. p. 149.

(n) *Grot.* lib. ii. §. 5.

(o) Cum audisset (Augustus) inter pueros, quos in Syria Herodes Rex Judæorum intra bimatum jussit interfici, filium quoque ejus occisum; ait, melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium. *Macrob.* lib. ii. cap. 4.

than his son : a testimony so very peculiar and remarkable, that as the learned Dr *Clarke* observes (p) 'tis strange how *Grotius* could omit to mention it in the place above-mention'd.

The Author of the scheme of literal prophecy seems to question the fact of *Herod* it self, as related by St *Matthew* (as he had before question'd that of the journey of the Wise Men) and thinks it is subject to great difficulty (q) ; and well knowing of what service to the Christian cause the testimony of *Macrobius* now cited would be, he hath laboured all that he can to disprove and invalidate that testimony. But the great weakness of his reasoning, as well as his mistakes in the history of that matter, have been fully laid open by the learned Bishop *Chandler* in his vindication of his defence of Christianity, p. 461 to 472. and somewhat more largely by the learned Mr *Masson* in a dissertation annexed thereto, in which the slaughter of the children in *Bethle-bem* as an historical fact in St *Matthew*'s Gospel, and the testimony of *Macrobius* concerning it, are clearly vindicated beyond any possibility of reply.

The Death and Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour Christ, and the report of the Miracles which He wrought, were transmitted to the Emperor *Tiberius* by *Ponius Pilate* the Governor of *Judæa*; it being the custom of the Governors of the Roman Provinces to send the Emperor an account of all remarkable Events which happen'd under their Government, as *Eusebius* testifies (r) : upon which *Tiberius Cæsar* propos'd to the Senate that our Saviour might be enroll'd among the Gods. This relation Mr *Eckard* observes is doubted of by

(p) *Sermons at Boyle's Lectures*, ibid.

(q) *Scheme, &c.* p. 37.

(r) *Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. cap. 2.*

some men (s), but for what reason I cannot imagine, unless it be as Dr *Cave* intimates that the Acts of *Pilate* were corrupted, or at least others framed in imitation of them, both by the Hereticks and the Gentiles (t). For this relation of *Pontius Pilate* is not only mention'd by *Eusebius* in the place now cited and by *Orosius*, but also by *Tertullian* and *Justin Martyr*, who in his second apology for the Christian Religion, for the proof of our Blessed Saviour's Miracles appeals to these Acts of *Pilate*, which appeal surely he would not have dared to have made to the adversaries of the Christian Faith, if there had been no such Acts.

And to mention no more, the miraculous darkness and earthquake, which happen'd at our Blessed Saviour's Crucifixion, are in a particular manner attested to by *Pblegon Trallianus*, who was the Emperor *Adrian*'s Free-man, and who finish'd his famous calculation of the Olympiads about A. D. 140. (u) Which Testimonies of Prophane and Heathen Authors concerning the truth of several remarkable passages mention'd in Scripture I do not here produce, as if I thought in the least that the Gospel-History was not sufficiently clear and evident without them, but only for the more compleat satisfaction of our modern Infidels, who are apt to lay a much greater stress upon such kind of testimony, than they do upon

(s) *Echard's Eccl. History*, 8vo. p. 231. sub A. D. 34.

(t) *Hist. Literar.* Vol. i. p. 24.

(u) Τετραγω δ' ἔτει τῆς διακοσίοντος δευτέρης ολυμπιαδὸς &c. In the fourth year of the two hundred and second Olympiad there happen'd the greatest Eclipse of the Sun that was ever known; there was such a dark night at the sixth hour of the day, that the Stars were seen in the Heavens; and there was a great Earthquake in Bithynia which overturn'd a great part of Nicæa. These words are to be seen in *Eusebius's* and *Hieronymus's Chronicon*; and *Origen* mentions it *Tract. 35.* upon *Matt.* and in his second *Book against Celsus*. *Grot. Annotat. ad lib. iii. de Veritat. §. 14.*

that

that of the Sacred Writers. And since there is no doubt, but if they could have found such plain testimonies in profane Authors of good credit, which were directly opposite to the accounts of the facts mentioned in the Gospel, they would have been loud and clamorous enough with them, and thought them a sufficient ground of their unbelief, we hope they will be so just and consistent with themselves, as to allow the force and authority of such testimonies when they are urged against them. And so much for the proof and evidence which we have of the Truth and Certainty of the Gospel-History.

Fourthly and lastly, I will make only one observation more, in which I shall be very short, because it is so frequently enlarged upon by all Christian Writers; and that is, concerning the Excellency of the Christian Religion, of which it hath pleased God in His great and abundant Goodness to give us such clear proof and evidence. We need not be at any pains to prove the Excellency of our Religion, since the greatest of our adversaries themselves have frequently allowed it; and whatever objections they have made to some of its peculiar Doctrines, such as the Trinity and Incarnation, &c. yet they have given sufficient attestation to the Excellency of its Precepts. And indeed whoever will but look into Christianity will soon find, that it is of all Religions in the world the most Excellent, and the most wisely contriv'd to promote the Honour and Glory of God, and the present and future Happiness of Men (w). And if this be so, it must surely ren-
der

(w) Methinks I may with some confidence challenge any Religion in the world, to shew such a compleat body and collection of holy and reasonable laws, established upon such promises and threatenings as the Gospel contains. And if any man can produce a Religion, that can reasonably pretend to an equal or a greater

der the crime of those men very great and heavy, who by fallacious reasonings and more especially by prophane wit and banter endeavour to ridicule and explode it out of the world. And this should likewise make all men extremely careful and sincere in the examination of the proofs and evidences of Christianity, before they finally settle themselves in Deism; since if the Gospel of Christ should at last be found to be true, Infidelity is reckoned among the worst of crimes, and threaten'd with the most terrible and severe punishment. See *Job. xv. 22, 24. Heb. ii. 1, to 5. chap. x. 21, 29. chap. iii. 12. Matth. xi. 20, to 25.* And this ought also to make all Persons in Authority exceedingly careful, that they do not suffer this Holy and Excellent Religion to be insulted and abused by open scurrility and prophane-ness, which tends to make the age grow wan-ton and insolent, and wears off that awfulness and veneration which Christianity is apt to have

greater confirmation than the Gospel hath; a Religion, the precepts and promises and threatenings whereof are calculated to make men wiser and better, more temperate and more chaste, more meek and more patient, more kind and more just, than the laws and motives of Christianity are apt to make men; if any man can produce such a Religion, I am ready to be of it. Let but any man shew me any Book in the world, the doctrines whereof have the seal of such Miracles as the doctrine of the Scriptures hath; a Book which contains the heads of our duty so perfectly, and without the mixture of any thing that is unreasonable or vicious, or any ways unworthy of God; that commands us every thing in reason necessary to be done, and abridgeth us of no law-ful pleasure, without offering us abundant recompence for our present self-denial; a Book, the rules whereof if they were practised, would make men more pious and devout, more holy and sa-ber, more just and fair in their dealings, better friends and bet-ter neighbours, better magistrates and better subjects, and bet-ter in all relations, and which does offer to the understanding of men more powerful arguments to persuade them to be all this; Let any man, I say, shew me such a Book, and I will lay aside the Scriptures, and preach out of that. Tillotson, vol. i. p. 67, 68.

upon

upon the minds of men, and thereby the more effectually disposes them for the reception of Atheism and Infidelity, which is of very bad and mischievous consequence to the State, as well as fatal and dangerous to the Souls of Men. And therefore it is incumbent on us all, who make profession of this Holy Religion, to be very watchful over our selves, that we neither give any offence to the enemies of our Faith, nor expose our own Souls to manifest danger by any plain instances of immorality and wickedness. And since we live in an age in which Prophaneness and Infidelity do so much abound, and the love of many towards Christ is waxed so cold, I think we ought to be so much the more ready in shewing our regard to our Great Master and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, by standing up the more earnestly and resolutely in defence of His Gospel. And the least, I think, which the Excellency of our Holy Religion requires of us, is that we be at all times ready and willing to make an open and publick profession of it. And therefore upon a full and careful examination of the Evidences of Christianity, as well as its Excellency, I freely declare with St Paul, *Rom. i. 16.* that *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.* And by the Grace of God, (without which our best resolutions are nothing but vain presumptions) I say, by the Grace of God, I am resolved (and I hope, kind Reader, thou art of the same mind) that whatever be the consequence of it in this world, either in point of contempt or ridicule, poverty or hardships, bonds or imprisonment, I will ever adhere to the Gospel of Christ; nay, and even tho' *I should die for it,* *I will not deny it in any wise.*

F I N I S.

